



## Meeting on KAA's proposed return to Silchester Road

The Curve Community Centre

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018, 5pm-7pm

### **Attendees/Speakers:**

David Benson, Principal – Kensington Aldridge Academy (DB)  
Ryan Bernard, Assistant Principal – Kensington Aldridge Academy (RB)  
Niall Dumigan, Assistant Principal – Kensington Aldridge Academy (ND)  
Stephanie Tyrer, Parent Governor – Kensington Aldridge Academy (ST)  
Matt Hogan, Grenfell Site Management Project Manager (MH)

### **1. Welcome and Introduction of speakers**

Mr Benson, Principal at KAA, introduced himself, and thanked everyone for coming. He also introduced his Assistant Principals, Ryan Bernard and Niall Dumigan, and Matt Hogan, from Independent Site Management Team.

### **2. Update from the Principal**

Mr Benson provided a brief update on the school's situation and the outcomes of parent consultation meetings this week:

- On the 29<sup>th</sup> March, Mr Benson wrote to parents talking about possible return to KAA1 and invited them to meeting on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April. A text was sent the same day to alert parents that the letter was coming home, however only 12 parents attended. Following this meeting, the school received feedback that some parents had not received this letter because it was sent home with students and not by post, the school has now committed to sending all updates on the proposed return to KAA1 by post going forward.
- On 11<sup>th</sup> May, Mr Benson wrote another letter to parents, this time sent by post, giving feedback on the 17<sup>th</sup> April meeting and explaining the latest thinking and planning on the proposed move and inviting parents to further parent meetings. On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May the school held a meeting specifically for those who survived the tower or were severely bereaved. On Tuesday they held another meeting for re-housed students. Third meeting on Wednesday for all parents.
- On behalf of school Mr Benson said that he wanted to say how sorry he was for all the turbulence and disruption you have experienced as a result of the fire over the last year and express the sympathy that he feels. He explained that as a school, KAA was trying it's best to provide comfort and care to the community. However, something the school has heard recently is why hasn't the school communicated more about potential move. Mr Benson then provided extensive details of what the school had focused on since the fire (re-writing timetables, moving to BDA and Latymer Upper, organising extensive therapy support and lobbying for the funding for this, building the temporary school, and settling all staff and students into the Portakabins). Mr Benson explained that it wasn't until the school had settled into KAA2 by the Spring term that the difficulties and inconveniences appeared more acute in the Portakabins (e.g. the end of term assessments could not take place anywhere with formality and rigour, there are no indoor sports facilities and students



had to do PE lessons out in cold, the collegiately of the school suffered due to the separate blocks).

- Mr Benson then recounted that the wrapping on the tower got a third of the way up and he and his leadership team could start to imagine that if the tower was wrapped and safe the school could operate back at KAA1. The school was then told that the earliest possible time the deconstruction of the tower could start was January, and it could take 70 weeks. If KAA didn't move back in September, the school could be based in Portakabins for 3-5 years. Mr Benson explained the loss of student applications this would cause year on year and its implications on the funding that the school receives. Overall, Mr Benson explained that these circumstances, of remaining in the Portakabins and seeing a reduction in the school's funding, could result in each student achieving half a grade worse than if the school returned to KAA1.
- The school then began asking if the tower would be stable, if it would be safe, how much dust and noise the possible deconstruction would cause, and what the psychological implications would be of the students being in school under the tower.
- Mr Benson apologised if the school could have done more to communicate with students and parents, but that the decision on the proposed return has not yet been taken (it will be decided by Governors on 3<sup>rd</sup> July) and the school is now carrying out consultation with stakeholders.
- In order to make this decision, the Governors and the school will have to trust the independent advice from the authorities on asbestos, the monitoring of the tower and the plans for its deconstruction. Many parents have recently asked why they should trust these reports. Mr Benson explained his view that if you fundamentally don't trust Public Health England, Central Government and the London Fire Brigade, then you will never be satisfied with any independent reports. Mr Benson finished by saying that he is satisfied that level of expertise and resource going into this that we can rely on the advice the school is being given.

### ***3. Update from the Grenfell Site Project Manager***

Matt Hogan then provided a summary of the current status of the Grenfell site:

- Hogan explained that the Grenfell Tower building was damaged during the fire, but 3,500 aluminium poles, or 'props', have been installed where the building is most damaged. These were installed by specialists who deal with dangerous buildings all the time.
- Hogan also explained that a sophisticated monitoring system that can detect the slightest movement has been monitoring the building. All buildings are designed to move a little bit; it is safe as long as this movement stays within threshold levels. This system is monitoring for anything beyond that threshold, anything a little bit different.
- It was explained that the wrapping and scaffolding is primarily to protect those working on the site, but also those outside from anything that might fall from the tower. The site team currently anticipate that the wrapping will be finished by the anniversary on June 14<sup>th</sup>. The team are still looking into technical details of request from Grenfell United for a green wrapping, so in the coming months the wrapping may be replaced, but won't be completely bare at any time during this process.
- Explaining the work the Grenfell Site Management Team have done with the school, Hogan discussed the re-routing of fire escape routes at back of the school's playground as the usual assembly point falls within the crime scene area. The site



team are also currently working on a request from the school to reintroduce the school's community entrance and hope to do this before the school's potential return.

- With regards to the potential deconstruction, Hogan explained that no decisions have yet been made for a range of reasons. Primarily, those involved need to understand more about the building and have already commissioned surveys to obtain the information required. However, the surveys require the scaffolding to be complete so the Grenfell site team won't get this information until the end of June. In addition, any decision on the deconstruction of the tower needs to balance community feeling, the results of the public inquiry, and police investigation.
- It's understandable that the community have questions about the detail of the deconstruction process, however this information is not yet available because no decisions have been made. Based on previous experience and what is known about the Tower there are some broad factors being considered in more detail.
- Given the layout of the estate and the position of the tower and sensitive nature of what's happened the method of deconstruction needs to be sensitive and slow. Progressive, top down deconstruction which takes time is likely to be the most appropriate method.
- It's difficult to be specific at the moment, but we know it will be noisy and dusty. However, there are lots of measures which can help manage this. The main way that dust will be managed will be to keep the site damp, the wrapping also helps minimise dust. Air quality monitoring currently in place will remain in place through deconstruction, however long that takes. To date no significant change to air quality has been observed. Public Heath England monitoring shows no significant change.
- In terms of noise, hard to say exactly, but we know there is concrete which will involve noise being made. We have already discussed when it would be more reasonable for noisy activities to take place in outline terms with the school, but need to do this with Lancaster West estate and other stakeholders when the time is right.
- For planning purposes, it's estimated that deconstruction could take at least 70 weeks from a technical perspective, however when factoring in potential steps to minimise impact for the community this could be considerably longer.

#### **4. Questions from the floor**

Mr Benson then began taking questions from the floor.

**Q1: Which local people have been informed of the intended move back to KAA1? Treadgold House residents have not been informed.**

DB: Our communications up to this point have been just with students and parents.

**Q2: We have heard that emergency exits are changing, the school is being refurbished and there will be skip in front of school. Is this true?**

DB: There is no remedial work or expansion that requires skips as that would require planning permission. Please tell us the best way to communicate our plans to the community, whether that be a newsletter, notice board, meetings, and we will do that.

**Q3: How will sound of screaming students at lunch affect those with PTSD?**

DB: Not something we have thought about, would need to consult with professionals. Thank you for bringing this up.

**Q4: How and when will the rubble be cleared away?**



MH: We don't know at present. There is a lot we need to figure out with local residents and stakeholders. The material from the Tower will be of varying sizes and quantities. This is also a sensitive issue and we need to understand the wishes of the bereaved and survivor families regarding the removal and future use of any materials.

**Q5: How many staff are against the move? What will happen if they don't want to move? Staff turnover is very high as it is.**

ND: I speak to a lot of staff, some will find it very difficult, but the process we are planning to prepare students for a move back is being replicated with staff. This includes private visits, therapy where needed, and a gradual reorientation. The vast, vast majority of staff that I have spoken to actively want to return and miss the building. There are some that have shared concerns and we are working with them on their concerns and worries.

RB: I'd just like to add that it is not accurate that the school has a large staff turnover, it is actually very normal. The number of new teachers your child might have is a result of growth as a growing school.

DB: Actually if we don't go back, one of the difficulties is likely to be staff turnover, given staff (like students and parents) are keen to get back to their real building.

**Q6: Have the new staff coming in been trained in PTSD and support?**

ND: It will be part of the new staff training schedule, just as it was for all of the new staff that started in September. It was a very unique situation for those teachers to be walking into, but during their induction training all teachers received the same training that our existing staff had received in the summer term immediately after the fire.

DB: PTSD training for our staff will be an ongoing process within our CPD calendar for at least 5 years.

**Q7: My son had PTSD prior to the fire and it has now got worse – why is my son not receiving therapy?**

ND: I won't discuss individual student cases as it is not clinically appropriate, but I will stay after the meeting and discuss with you one-to-one.

**Q8: At 'Kids on the Green', we see a lot of KAA students and not one has said anything positive about support at KAA. I'm talking about a lot of kids and parents. When we are talking to parents and young people it is very concerning.**

ND: If I'm not hearing it, I can't act on it. That's not what I hear in the school, when I talk to students. We have students of talking to Place2BE. Our therapy team in the playground every break and lunch time, with over 200 students accessing the services we have available.

**Q9: Some of my pupils say that they have been on a waiting list? It would be good if you work alongside the service.**

ND: Definitely, we are open to that.

**Q10: I'm a youth worker at Henry Dickens Community Youth Service. Do you feel Place2Be is an adequate service to provide a trauma therapy service? It is designed for mild household issues, not children suffering from severe trauma. They are not certified therapists. It is not good enough to have volunteer therapists.**



DB: I agree that Place2Be therapists are not trained to deal with cases of PTSD however that is not what we are using them for. They work alongside internal therapists and the CAMHS professionals. The Place2Be therapists are dealing with appropriate level cases.

**Q11: What are the other alternatives to returning? What other alternatives will parents be signposted to? Will there be options for parents to move their students to another school?**

DB: Will 100% work to guarantee places at other schools if parents want to move their child, we just ask that children consider coming back and join the re-orientation visits. We had a meeting today with the Secretary of State for Education and spoke about this exact issue.

**Q12: Would it be possible to speak to the borough to ensure these places are made available for parents who want to move their child?**

DB: Yes, but it's not just the borough who needs to ensure that, it's central government. But in any case I don't want to publicise this as we believe the best thing for our students is for them to stay in our community, with their teachers and with their friends, however I can say here that no student will be left without a place.

**Q13: If it's not a foregone conclusion why are the sixth form if safety precautions have not been completed?**

DB: It is not a foregone conclusion, but the health and safety and fire assessments for limited access have been finished. The sixth form students were consulted, and around 195 out of 200 wanted to sit their exams at KAA1. They only had once chance at their A Levels, they wanted to do them in their school, so we worked to make that happen.

**Q14: Don't you think the noise alone will distract students from their learning?**

MH: It will be noisy at times, but we've said there will be no noisy work during exams. We are committed to working with the school and others to make this work in a way which minimises disruption.

**Q15: Which reports and assessments have been done/concluded? Why can't we see them?**

DB: There is an interim risk assessment for students using exam hall with a fire strategy for the limited use at the moment. We need to have a very, very thorough evacuation strategy for that building for eventual full re-occupation. We can evacuate in four mins, it is a horizontal structure, there are fire breaks and containment zones to stop a fire spreading, and we can drill students on how to evacuate. Schools are very safe places because we can train people what to do if there is a fire through regular drills, unlike hospitals, shopping centres.

**Q16: Will we be able to have transparency online, including risk assessments and floor plans?**

DB: Yes. The reason it's not there now as having to rewrite fire exit strategy with a new muster point outside the leisure centre. We will add this detail over the course of the summer term.

**Q17: Why are the people on site wearing masks but you've got the sixth formers in the same space? You don't know how much asbestos is blowing out the building? How do have a proper risk assessment but you don't know how much asbestos is**



**blowing across the school? You've just moved sixth form into a building where you've done no asbestos risk assessment.**

MH: I make no decision on moving students, but I can provide general information on asbestos. We know from documentation that asbestos was present when the building was built and when it was refurbished. However, we have done further assessments since the fire so that the risk can be appropriately managed. All people entering the Tower are required to wear protective equipment, including respiratory protection, as an asbestos precaution. The air quality monitoring conducted by Public Health England has shown no discernible change to any indicators being measured, including asbestos.

**Q18: My understanding is not the material itself but the micro particles that go in to the air. These asbestos micro particles are everywhere, they can't be contained. What about other toxins? What about other gases, poisons there may be? As a moral issue, I would feel very strongly against taking any child in a building where this 100% has not been ruled out. Headmasters says central government has signed this off, we request to see all reports and need to see them online before we can make any decision about students going back.**

MH: I am not a Public Health expert but I am working with Public Health England and understand that we are all exposed to small amounts of asbestos in the air. Asbestos related illness is usually associated with long term workplace exposure to high levels of airborne asbestos fibres. The air quality monitoring conducted by Public Health England has shown no discernible change to any indicators being measured, including asbestos. That air quality monitoring information is already published monthly online (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-monitoring-following-the-grenfell-tower-fire>) and shared in various newsletters sent to the community. If hasn't reached you, I'm very sorry.

**Q19: If you are speaking to the Secretary of State, it is good to hear this issue has gone to highest level possible. We would like to have assessments done by independent professionals we choose ourselves. Could you ask the Secretary of State for that?**

DB: I absolutely will feedback to the advisor, and let them know that you have requested that and forward you their response.

**Q20: Can you guarantee none of our children will get asbestosis?**

MH: I'm not an expert on asbestos and would recommend Public Health England are invited to provide a specific response. Public Health England will continue to monitor the air quality as they have been doing for the past year for as long as necessary. To date, their monitoring has shown no discernible change to any indicators being measured, including asbestos.

**Q21: Could you get someone from Public Health England to attend the next meeting?**

DB: Yes, we will invite them. It would be really good to come back and do more meetings. And clearly if there are risks of asbestos – which would affect staff as well – we cannot go back.

**Q22: Is there a financial benefit to returning? Has Mr Benson be pressured? Why the rush? Has the KAA building been cleaned and renovated?**



DB: Central Government has said they will fund us to stay at KAA2 for as long as we need to, so no financial element in this decision. It is entirely about what is best for students. Yes, the school is being fully cleaned and renovated before September.

**Q23: Why the rush?**

DB: I'm sorry if people feel rushed, we have been trying to move as quickly as we can and consult. People need to realise the only time we can move is over a summer holiday, so if we don't move now, we are looking at Sept 2019 earliest (by which time many students – e.g. current Y10 – will never have got to return). Or if we wait until the tower is deconstructed we will be in W12 for many, many years, and we want to get back to our community.

**Q24: Could build a sports hall? Maybe on Wormwood Scrubs?**

DB: I could ask, but as far as I am aware you cannot build on the Scrubs.

**Q25: Could you use both sites, just bring the students over for using the theatre and the sports hall?**

RB: We've looked at this compromise, but I wouldn't work practically splitting across both sites. We have really explored the issue about the transport between the two sites. The time lost in transporting students makes it impractical.

**Q26: It would be safer. Once demolition starts you would then be able to reassess. Couldn't you ask Central Government for funding for mini buses? I can't get my head around how we can consider this before we know what demolition looks like. When you come with heavy machinery, do we know what effect that will have? Once they are in there it is too late. Where is your plan B? What if you move back and are then disrupted and moved again?**

DB: On that, what I want to do with my team, the governing body and professionals, is take any possible reasonable step to satisfy ourselves with objective and independent evidence. Ultimately if you decide you are too frightened the parents know what is best for their child.

**Q27: Would help if you set up a residents' panel which informs the rest of the community about what is happening? Maybe have a parents' board that can echo some of the decisions being made by the school?**

DB: Very happy to think about how we can do that.

**Q28: Do you not think it's better for their wellbeing and noise around them for them to be transported somewhere else?**

DB: When we opened for 18 months we operated next to the building work on the tower and it was noisy and not too disruptive then. What we've been told is the sound will be like the sounds of the normal building site and not continuous noise. In the summer when it's hot and we need to open windows it might be more of an issue, but other than that not an issue.

**Q29: Have you have any communication with the residents? According to them they are going to block off the sports centre. You had the audacity to say when the tower is being deconstructed, the debris is going down on residents' side.**

DB: That is not what is definitely happening, that was an example of what the site team were willing to discuss to make moving back work for the school. Both Lanc West and KAA will be affected by the deconstruction and I hope we can work together.



**Q30: If the school wasn't there everyone in the tower would still be alive. It's the greed of the school. The school was too big; it was bigger than the drawings. If the school was not there the cladding would never have been there.**

RB: That's not fair, we are educators trying to do the best for our students. I understand you are angry, but you are directing that anger at the wrong people.

**Q31: Will the supplementary school return during weekends and evenings?**

DB: Certainly. In addition to education of 1200 students we have heavy community use. People miss playing badminton, basketball and five a side football in our sports hall, the school was used by church groups on the weekend.

**Q32: You're telling us about all these experts opinions? Where are they? They throwing you up on the front line. Why are we going to trust them?**

**Q33: Why don't we think about calling a community meeting where we can have experts in the different fields to explain exactly what they think and what they think the risks involved in a return are.**

DB: Matt Hogan is here from the Grenfell Site Management Team, David Bailey from CAHMS will be at our next meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> June.

**Q34: Don't call Matt can expert on deconstruction, he said he isn't one.**

MH: I work for the Independent Site Management Team and am working with lots of different specialists. This meeting is about telling you in general terms what we know at the moment and hearing your concerns so I can arrange for the right specialists to attend future meetings as appropriate.

**Q35: Isn't the best thing getting students back to normality? The reality, if it's safe, I don't see the problem.**

DB: Thank you, we know many parents feel like that.

**Q36: My son has severe asthma, what happens to him when demolition starts?**

DB: It's got to be safe for every single child, whether they have asthma, whether they are in year 7 or year 13, if they are students who survived the tower or those that have PTSD. It will be about believing reports on air quality that are coming out from Public Health England.

**Q37: A few weeks ago there was a fire alarm in KAA2, which I believe wasn't taken seriously enough. Why wasn't the building evacuated?**

RB: This referred to a false alarm, during lunch, which we discovered very quickly was set off, either accidentally or on purpose, by some students. As it was lunch time most children were outside. We can keep our school really safe, its horizontal structure we can exit safely in a very short amount of time, helped by the fact that we can drill our students on the procedure. We know fire is sensitive and when we are back we will have clear plans with students about how to respond in the event of an alarm.

ND: When we moved to KAA2 we had a fire drill very on. We made sure that students that we knew were particularly affected had additional support.

**Q38: So many students who needed it did not receive that support? Children were told to stay put during this fire alarm.**



RB: As our fire alarm system allows us to very quickly determine where the alarm was triggered and if it is genuine or a false alarm, it was switched off and we were very quickly able to inform staff that it not necessary to evacuate the students. We don't evacuate straight away if we can see it is a false alarm.

**Q39: When this was mentioned at the parent meeting earlier this week, why wasn't Mr Benson aware of the incident?**

RB: Mr Benson may well have been offsite at the time and this was not an incident which in our judgement caused major issues, though we are sorry if it upset a particular student.

**Q40: Prior to what happened last year, there would have been three entrances for fire engines to access the building. Now there would only be one entrance to reach the school in the event of the fire. Has this been assessed by the fire department?**

DB: We can't answer for LFB.

**Q41: Is the cladding on the school exactly the same as it did on the tower? How do we resolve the issue that in the next few months the inquiry will say that the cladding was the major contributor? How do we manage that every day when the school has cladding that at least looks the same?**

DB: The honest answer is that I don't know. I want to take that step by step. But we think that if we are in our real school we can support students better in all areas – including being upset by the inquiry. But I don't know about addressing the fact that it looks visually similar, that is not something that has been mentioned before. We know that the style of cladding is different and safer which is the most important thing.

**Q42: I understand you are educators, not builders and experts in cladding. But as a community we need these questions answered, I suggest there is a move forward with emotional aspect and mental health provisions, teachers understanding the level of trauma, not just PTSD, but emotional wellbeing. This just means teachers to be aware. Consistency is important, we want students in the school they love, but we need to balance that and not risk re-traumatising students.**

**Q43: You give the wrong students help but the students that need it aren't receiving it. Why? (from students)**

ND: We set up very clear referral system. There is a self-referral system by email or a note put in a private box. The therapy services have been advertised in form time, during assemblies and exhibits during national mental health week. We also have teacher referrals, any teacher concerned about a young person can fill in an online form. Goes to me and therapy lead. Every Wednesday we assess referrals in our therapy hub with CAMHS. That has been the case since September.

**Q44: I've spoken to a lot of parents; one student has come off CAHMS who shouldn't have. Lots of students who were in the tower who haven't received help.**

ND: Not all students are going to be happy about all aspects of provision all the time. No school is perfect. We are trying our best to look after the kids. Not just their personal wellbeing but also getting a great education. We are an outstanding school for the community. We can look into doing an anonymous Place2Be survey to assess the quality of our provision.

**Q45: Can you get the technical specs for the school's cladding?**



DB: Yes and we will add these to the information on our website.

**Q46: I work as a community worker for the supplementary school – you need to talk to community and parents more. If you can give us more information we can do this.**

DB: Yes, please give us your contact details.

**Q47: It's almost the month of June, we're getting to a point where 3<sup>rd</sup> July to make a decision is very soon. I want to spend June with my loved ones. With next meeting in June, it's very sensitive. I don't think it's the right opportunity for the next meeting.**

DB: I appreciate what you are saying, and of course we would rather not be having conversations like this in Ramadan or near the anniversary or during the inquiry. We would rather not be in this situation at all. But if we don't move back in September and stay in Portkabins every student will suffer from that, and we are moving as fast as we can.

**Q48: You speak about being part of a community, those 6 students who asked to do their exams at BDA, if they don't get grades it could be because of being isolated for their exams?**

DB: Not everyone is going to be happy with every decision. If we had said everyone does exams at BDA so we stay together, the 190 sixth form students and parents who wanted to do them in their real school would have been very angry and upset. We did what we thought was best.

**Q49: The light is on a night every night at KAA1, can you please sort that.**

DB: As a I understand the stairwells have to remain on at night according to fire regulations.

**Nadia: Ok we are going to stop here, if you have further questions you can ask them privately to the team.**

#### **Actions for the school:**

- 1) Communication with local residents' association
- 2) All independent reports online when published
- 3) Mr Benson to raise with SoS if independent verification of reports can be done and paid for by Central Government
- 4) Report on reduced access for fire engines to be signed off by London Fire Brigade
- 5) Cladding report for school including technical details to be published online
- 6) Anonymous student survey of Place2Be provision