

Closure of Parsons Mead School

Parents' current understanding of the situation and
questions remaining

3rd July 2005

In July 2005 parents were told that the Parsons Mead Educational Trust (PMET) would merge with the Vernon Educational Trust (VET) that owns Danes Hill

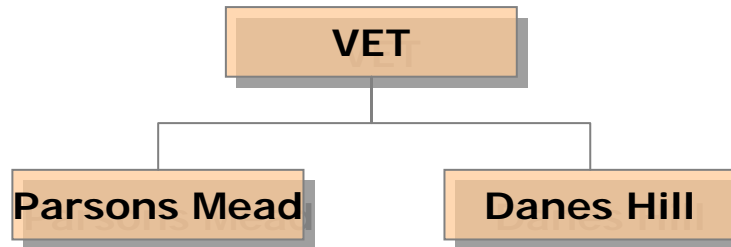
- March 2005: parents received letter from PMET
 - Pupil numbers too low for the school to survive independently
 - Discussions had started with Cognita
- End April 2005: outline agreement reached between Parsons Mead and Cognita
 - PM under new ownership at start of Autumn term 2005
 - PM to remain all-girls school with both Jr. and Sr. department
- Early July 2005: parents informed of contract signed with VET
 - Parents had not been consulted (PMET trustees had to make decision overnight)
 - In anticipation of merger VET Trustees had become the new Parsons Mead Trustees
- July 2005: Robin Parfitt* wrote letter to parents *“following the merger of Danes Hill School and Parsons Mead”* that he would now act as Principal of both schools.
He enclosed a list of the Trustees of VET, *“the educational charity which owns both Danes Hill and Parsons Mead”*

* Until recently, headmaster of Danes Hill

During Autumn term 2005 parents were led to believe the school was recovering

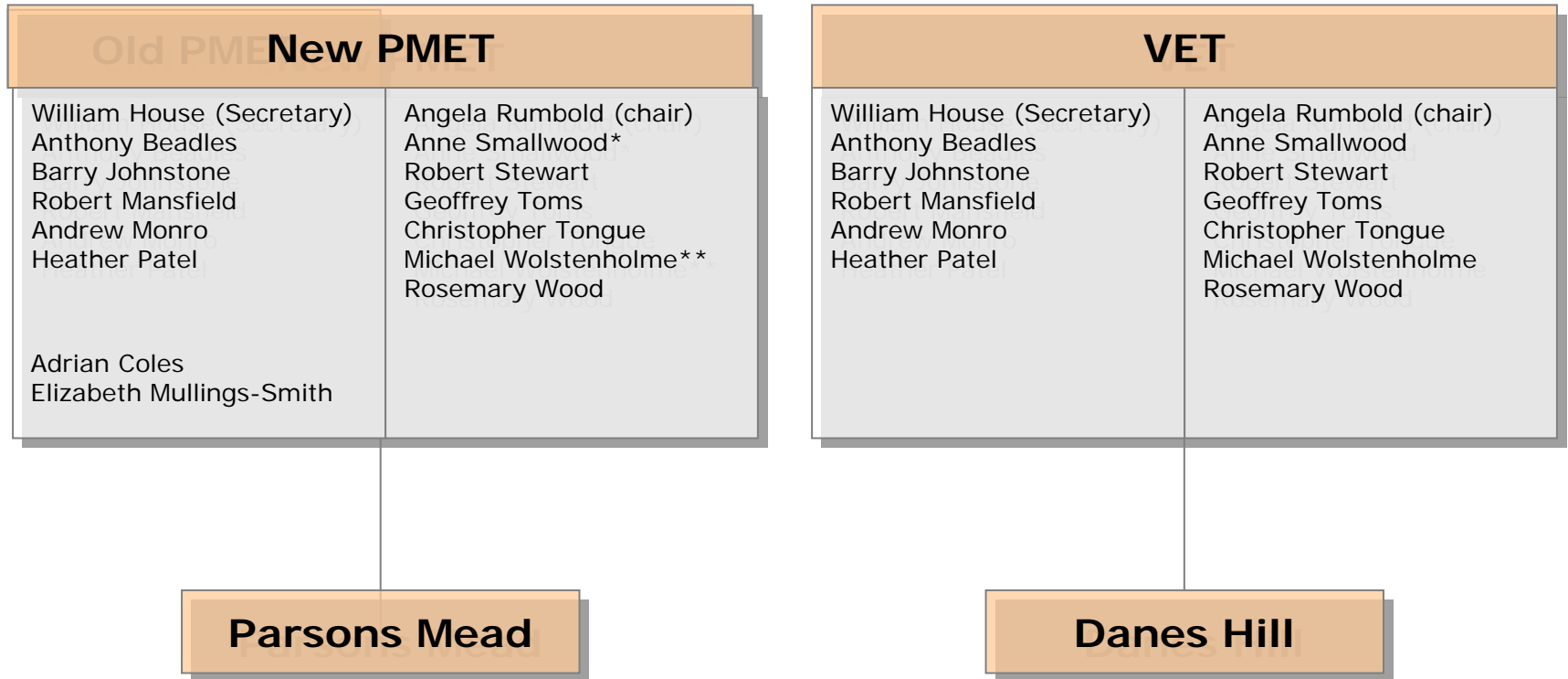
Ownership structure

(according to letters and presentations to parents)



- Promise in writing: "Sixth form will certainly continue for another 2 years"
- Quote Dame Angela (VET chair): "Turning around a school takes at least 5 years"
- Pupil numbers picking up from 211 at beginning of term to 238 at end of term (+13%)
- Evidence that the governors were investing in the school: extra staff, ICT (£80k first phase), interactive white boards, junior library, swimming pool cover
- Headmistress reporting positively in Newsletter about relationship with Danes Hill

Although official letters from Robin Parfitt stated that PMET and VET had merged in July 2005, this actually never happened



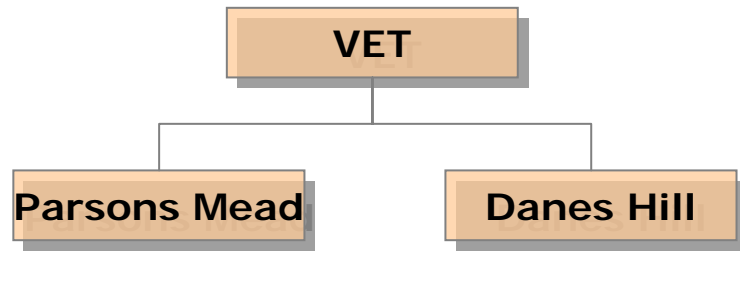
Instead of merging the two trusts, the VET trustees forced all but two PMET trustees to resign and appointed themselves as the new PMET trustees

* Resigned on 30/10/2005

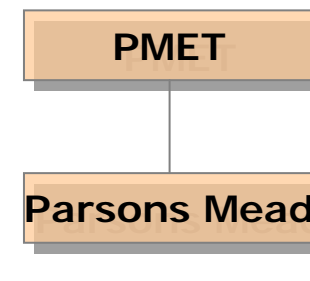
** Resigned on 10/2/2006

What are the consequences of the Trusts not having merged?

A. Merged



B. Not merged



Ownership

- VET has acquired Parsons Mead and must have paid a price for it or promised to invest or keep school open for x years; VET trustees to act in best interest of both schools

- No formal connection with VET or Danes Hill; PMET trustees to act in best interest of Parsons Mead (potential conflict of interest?)

Investments

- Investments paid by VET

- Investments paid by Parsons Mead (bank loan)

Continuity

- Bankruptcy not possible as long as Danes Hill is still solvent; VET still has power to close the school if turnaround not successful

- Parsons Mead faces bankruptcy if bills cannot be paid; VET has no responsibility whatsoever for staff or pupils

Assets

- After closure of Parsons Mead, Danes Hill has every right to use former Parsons Meads grounds and assets

- After closure of PM, assets of PMET to be used for education of girls in the area (not necessarily Danes Hill)

Parents would like to understand the rationale for certain decisions the Parsons Mead trustees made; were these decisions really in the best interest of the school?

- Why have the Trusts not merged and why have parents never been informed about VET not owning Parsons Mead?
- Why was Mrs Moran (former Head of History at Danes Hill) appointed as PM headmistress without a formal application procedure?
- Why spend so much money when the school could not afford it?
 - Was there a business plan supporting the investments in staff, ICT, library, etc?
 - Why insource maintenance of the grounds?
- Why was the marketing manager withdrawn after Easter?
- Why have no efforts been made to explore opportunities to continue education for existing pupils at Parsons Mead (e.g. Cognita, fee increase)?
- Why have the Trustees waited until exam week to announce the closure? Numbers were known in April. Are we not entitled to a full term's notice?
- Why have the Trustees refused to meet the parents after the closure announcement?

Many questions remain

We ask the Trustees again to meet us and give us insight in what really happened; until then we will continue our search for the truth

For more information, please check our website:



www.pmparents.co.uk

The website will be updated on a regular basis throughout the summer and now has an open forum where the issues can be discussed with parents and other interested parties