Moving Forward, Looking Back – Gamlingay Village Primary

Gamlingay First School operates from a building that has delivered education in the village since the 1870's. It was built as a secular (not connected to any particular religious denomination) school, and until the 1950's had a pointed steeple coming from its square front section. This building represents a large investment in the education of the village, and its particular architectural features and the context in which it was built are felt to be important in telling a little bit of the history of education in the nation as a whole. Quoted below is some of the reasoning behind the building being listed for preservation: (GradeII)

"In spite of the loss of the upper part of the tower many years ago, the school and house remain otherwise little altered. Not only is the school fine architecturally but it is an early example of a school erected by a School Board in a rural area following the Education Act of 1870."

Education in the village, and how it is provided has changed many times over the past 150 years, and has always been contentious! Part of that history was the building of Gamlingay Village College in the 1960's. Initially built as a secondary school which also provided adult education, it later fitted into the middle school system. Now the First School has joined the CAM Academy Trust, it has gone from being a lower school to a full primary school, and from September 2018 will have a fresh new identity, uniform, and soon a new building and facilities on the old Village College site.

Gamlingay Village Primary school is about providing the best education and prospects for the young people who attend. To go forward it is sometimes also a good idea to look back, and recognise the long investment in education that has existed in the village and with this in mind it is worth considering a few aspects of the new school.

Gamlingay Village College will be the site of the new school, and it represented a 'Village College' movement (founded by Henry Morris*) which shares a heritage with Comberton Village College, the founding school of the trust the First School has joined. To build from, and acknowledge that strong historical link, the term "Village" remains in the title of the school.   Gamlingay Village Primary will continue to embed the strong educational principles and community values of the Village College movement as progressed by the CAM Academy Trust and embodied in its 'Excellence For All'

The new logo of the school contains a nod to the old building, which as a listed structure will remain a fixture in the village into the future. In the note listing the building the feature chosen is described as a "simple plate tracery rose window" and these feature prominently on the schools main facade and side. By incorporating a little bit of heritage in both the

name of the school, and the logo design, it is hoped that the school moving forward will be firmly rooted, and can grow and flourish, to the benefit of all the children who attend and the wider community.

* Henry Morris (1889-1961) was the Chief Education Officer in Cambridgeshire for over 30 years from 1922. In 1924 he wrote the now famous Memorandum which led to the founding of the Village Colleges. The movement seeded a change towards "community education" in many parts of Britain and overseas. This change was based on the belief that education should be a lifelong process. He called it "raising the school leaving age to 90". He was an outstanding man and one of the greatest figures in education of the 20th century. His final public appearance was the official opening of Comberton Village College.

References:

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