

DOG KENNEL HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Dog Kennel Hill
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Friday, 14th July 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

Update on the proposed hard federation between Dog Kennel Hill and Rotherhithe Primary Schools

I wrote to you in April about the proposal by the Governing Body to form a hard federation between Rotherhithe and DKH Primary Schools and we promised to come back to you again this term. It may be useful to recap the reasons for this proposal before we explain about progress and plans for the consultation process.

The reasons for forming a hard federation

In 2013, DKH School was facing many problems, which made us vulnerable to being put into special measures. The Governing Body approached Rotherhithe Primary to soft federate due to their strong leadership team and the fact that they had a proven track record of improving outcomes in a short period of time. We asked Mrs Amien-Cloete to lead the Federation as Executive Headteacher. We have since seen a dramatic increase in pupils' achievement across all years and for all pupil groups e.g. gender and ethnicity. We have established a stable and highly effective teaching staff. We have seen the implementation of a strong leadership structure. We have been acknowledged by Ofsted as a Good school following their inspection earlier this term. This has been a major turnaround for the school in a relatively short period of time.

A soft federation is a temporary arrangement and, while it has been successful, has always left questions about what happens at the end of its term. This is not conducive to long term staff and leadership stability.

The Governing body has advertised unsuccessfully for a new Headteacher six times in the last three years, despite taking best advice from the Local Authority and schools who had appointed successfully. As you will know from the news, teacher recruitment, and especially Headteacher recruitment, is currently extremely challenging. Local schools have also suffered similarly.

The Governing Body had considered the possibility of not being able to recruit a suitable Headteacher and had looked at options with the Local Authority, who have much experience of these matters, such as becoming part of an academy chain, (the Governors felt very strongly that this was not in the interests of the school), or considering other partnerships (which entailed long timescales and considerable risk).

The alternative was to turn the soft federation into a hard federation, based on three years of very successful collaboration, during which the character of the school and its strengths had been preserved and in many cases improved e.g. sport, music provision and academic achievement. This was seen by the Governing Body as not only the best option for DKH but an opportunity to build two even stronger and better schools. Rotherhithe's Governing Body viewed this opportunity similarly.

"Where Children Love To Learn"

Creative

Aspirational

Resilient

Empathic

Respectful

A hard federation provides many opportunities such as sharing of practices, giving children more varied learning experiences, providing staff with better development opportunities and thus attracting the best talent, and providing economies of scale, which are vital in times of falling budgets.

A hard federation has a single governing body, an Executive Headteacher who will hold a strategic role and be working across both schools, and each school will have its own Head of School and Senior Leaders who will have responsibility for the day to day management of the school.

Progress and next steps for the consultation

The Working Party that was formed by representatives from both Governing Bodies has met several times this term and has been consulting other schools who have hard federated, seeking advice from experts and considering the best ways to allow for a full and proper consultation with pupils, parents and staff. There is a clear process that has to be followed and we have been guided on this by the Local Authority.

Unfortunately, the work by the Working Party has taken longer than anticipated but for good reasons of taking best advice. Their proposed consultation documents and process was discussed by the DKH Governing Body on Monday (10th July 2017) and will be discussed by Rotherhithe's Governing Body this coming Monday (17th July 2017). All Governors have had the opportunity for input. The result of this is that further changes are needed and it is anticipated that governors will agree the final version over the summer holiday.

Assuming agreement is reached by both Governing Bodies, a six-week consultation process will start very early next term. The documents developed will explain more fully what a hard federation is, the proposed leadership structure, the anticipated benefits and risks, what changes people would see, and try to answer likely questions. During this process, all parents will have several opportunities to meet with and ask questions of the Governors and Schools Leadership Teams and to provide formal and informal feedback.

The decision about whether to proceed is the role of the Governing Bodies once they have considered all the responses from pupils, staff and parents. If the final decision is to proceed, it is hoped that the hard federation would be formed for commencement on 1st January 2018.

The Governing Bodies of both schools are clear that the priority in the current discussions is the needs of children in both schools and providing the very best care and education it can for every child. We see an opportunity in the hard federation to combine the strengths of the two schools on a permanent basis while preserving what has made them both successful in their own rights. The consultation process will allow that belief to be explored further before a final decision is made.

We look forward to being in touch at the beginning of next term and we wish every one of you a happy and restful summer.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor Cunningham
Chair of Governors