

## **School Federation Consultation Final Feedback Report 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

Report compiled by Dr Helen Jenner, Independent Consultant, appointed to support the consultation process. This report should be read alongside the Consultation Document (Appendix 1), Frequently Asked Questions Document (Appendix 2), and the Consultation Summary Presentation (Appendix 3).

### Introduction

This report summarises the planning undertaken to lead to a public consultation, and the responses to that consultation, which considered a proposal that Swanlea, Stewart Headlam and Hague Schools should move to a formal federation with a single governing body.

The governors proposed the merging of the two current governing bodies to form a single governing body, responsible for all 3 schools. The three schools will continue to exist as separate schools.

### Background

All 3 schools provide an excellent standard of education and have worked closely together to create an outstanding family of schools for the community.

The schools have increasingly been working together to ensure smooth transitions for our children. The Governors from Swanlea and Hague/Stewart Headlam have both discussed the future and agree that now is the right time to consider formalising their partnership so that they can plan strategically together to continue to provide the best possible education for their children. They believe this will support excellent 3-19 curriculum planning but will also provide opportunities to review spending so that they can maximise value for money and shared access to resources. Governors think this is an exciting opportunity to build a collaborative partnership model focused on driving improvements for the whole community through an integrated educational excellence approach.

As this proposal does not affect staffing, curriculum or admissions policies for the schools there are no equalities issues. The new governing body will adopt an Instrument of Governance that continues to reflect the local community and listen to the voice of parents and students. The governance model is based on treating schools as equal partners, and protecting the quality of early years, primary, secondary and sixth form provision.

## Governors Planning

A consultation document<sup>1</sup> was prepared and, along with a letter, from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors was placed on the schools' websites on.

The consultation ran from Sep 11<sup>th</sup> – Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 2023.

Parents and staff have been sent regular updates about the proposal and meetings they can attend to express their views. Children have been fully briefed and included in consultation processes

The consultation document explained a variety of ways for parents, staff and other stakeholders to contribute their views on the proposal – these included the opportunity to attend meetings, response boxes for queries in reception areas, a response form and encouragement to ask any member of school leadership teams about the proposal.

In addition, during the consultation governors prepared a set of Frequently Asked Questions<sup>2</sup> which was published on the website and added to during the consultation process, and circulated to all governors.

Governors have discussed the proposals in 3 governing body meetings. At their meetings on 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of October they considered responses so far, and agreed the proposed timeline, should they decide to approve the proposal, and the draft Instrument of Governance for the Interim (Temporary) Governing Body should it be required.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 both governing bodies will join an online meeting to consider this report and raise any questions, they will then split into separate Governing Bodies to make their decisions.

## Consultation Responses

### Parents Meetings

Schools Led Parents meetings were held at 3 different venues (Swanlea, Hague and Stewart Headlam Schools) and were attended by parents from all 3 schools.

These were held on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October.

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<sup>1</sup> Website link for consultation document and letters

<https://www.shhfederation.org/governors/governors-consultation-september-11th-october-30th-2023>

<https://swanlea.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Letter-to-Parents-Notice-of-Consultation-on-the-Proposal-of-Federation-Consultation-Document-Parents-September-11.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2

During the meetings Headteachers presented slides giving an overview of the proposal (Appendix 4) and parents were also shown how to use the school website to access the response forms.

The meetings were attended by 55 parents.

No parents attended the meeting based at Swanlea, but Swanlea parents did attend the meeting held at Stewart Headlam.

The Independent Consultant attended each meeting

Notes were taken by the independent consultant.

Parents asked a range of questions, which have been included in the FAQs. They sought re-assurance regarding protection of the importance of phase curriculum, and expertise in teaching particular age ranges. They were concerned at the pressure resulting from lower funding for schools. They were interested to know whether the federation would affect admissions arrangements or staff workload. Overall, parents were enthusiastic and say the benefits as outweighing the potential risks.

They have confidence that school leaders and governors will manage the risks well.

### **Virtual Meeting**

An online meeting led by the Independent Consultant took place on September 13<sup>th</sup>, a total of 20 computers logged on. The group were mainly parents, although staff and governors were represented. There were representatives from all 3 schools. Those present were positive about the proposal. They wondered why there funding for schools seems so low, and whether there was a risk to the schools being financially viable, and whether the secondary school would subsidise the primary schools. It was explained that the 3 schools have to continue to run separate viable independent budgets. They were re-assured that staff and leadership changes would not be made. They were interested in what would happen if more schools sought to join the federation. They sought clarification about how young people could contribute to the consultation. They were also shown how to use the school website to link through to the response form.

### **Staff Briefings and Meetings**

Staff briefings were held before the consultation was launched , staff were advised of the consultation meetings and they and union representatives were invite to meetings in their schools

### **Staff Meetings**

Staff comments were added to the FAQs:

Common themes were raised in all 3 schools:

Staff sought re-assurance regarding terms and conditions.

Staff sought re-assurance that the Schools would remain Local Authority Schools.

Staff sought re-assurance that the ethos, values and aims of the school would not change.

Staff were positive about the opportunities such a partnership would bring for all 3 schools.

## **Student Feedback**

Primary and secondary children received information about the proposal in assemblies. They were encouraged to respond online if they wished, and encouraged to ask questions in their form time.

Primary students were particularly positive, they felt stronger links would give them more opportunities to access Swanlea's resources and that the schools will be stronger working together. Secondary students are not expecting the change to have much impact on their day-to-day education but (especially those who had attended Hague or Stewart Headlam) like the idea of a family of schools.

## **Emails received to amalgamation email address**

One email was received from a neighbouring Headteacher expressing their support for the proposal.

## **Response Forms**

In total 66 response forms were received by 30<sup>th</sup> October (61 through online response, 5 returned to schools)

Where a child and a parent have both signed this is included in both categories. (4 forms)  
Where a single person counted in 2 categories they have been recorded in just 1 category.

Students. 28 Primary

Parents. 12 Primary 7 secondary

Staff. 14 Primary (plus 3 who have been included here as governors) 4 secondary

Governors. 4 Primary. 1 Secondary

Other 0

## **Any other feedback**

Tower Hamlets Local Authority are strongly supportive of this proposal and have approved the Draft Instrument of Governance for the Interim (Temporary) Governing Body, should the proposal be agreed by governors

## **Other Schools**

The schools in the E1 partnership have discussed the proposal and several have sent written support. There have been no objections received from other schools.

## Other Stakeholders

The DFE, Unions and faith groups have all been aware of the consultation. No objections have been raised.

### Responses received after draft report

Governors met to consider a draft of this report just before half term. The report has been updated with all new responses before the Governors' Decision Making Meeting on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Swanlea 1 additional response received

Stewart Headlam and Hague 1 additional online and 4 additional paper responses received.

These have been entered into the tables above, and new points included in the FAQs.

### Feedback to all stakeholders

It is recommended that this Consultation Summary, the FAQs, and the summary slides be posted on the school website and the link be emailed to parents, staff and other stakeholders, including the Local Authority.

### Overview of the independent consultant

The schools' governing boards have taken their role, in ensuring fair and thorough consultation, seriously and ensured all views are heard, and queries answered.

Where responses were made at meetings these have been included in FAQ responses. The FAQs were available on the schools' websites before the close of the consultation so that governors and parents could check their points have been raised and considered.

There is a positive response to the proposals. Staff are strongly supportive as were most parents and young people.

Parents have confidence in the leadership of the schools and want to protect the quality of education for their community. They feel that where finances for education are much tighter this will be a positive way to ensure efficiencies and to maximise expertise and resources across the schools. Parents who voiced concerns appreciated that these have been considered and were mainly re-assured. Some parents remain concerned that finances for schools are tight and that the federation will create more bureaucracy without addressing the challenges. Most parents agreed that the schools would be stronger working together, there would be better primary to secondary school transition, and more opportunities for staff and children.

They welcome the fact that the three schools will maintain their own individual status, separate finances and curriculum, whilst working together for the good of the community.

Primary parents stressed the importance of maintaining equal status for primary and secondary education for the Federation since outstanding primary provision is essential for secondary education to be successful.

Governors will have considered the proposal in 3 meetings before they reach their conclusions. In their 2<sup>nd</sup> meetings (16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October) they reviewed carefully the responses received in the first 5 weeks of consultation, addressed concerns raised and applied due diligence to the impact of the proposed federations. There was a strong view that the potential positives outweighed the possible risks. Before the extraordinary governors' meetings to reach their final decision governors will have read this report, and had the opportunity to comment or raise questions.

I can see no reason why this proposal would not be approved by Governors for the 3 schools.

Dr Helen Jenner  
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Supporting Stewart Headlam and Hague Federation and Swanlea Governing Body

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Consultation Document
- Appendix 2 – FAQ Summary
- Appendix 3 – Consultation Summary Slides
- Appendix 4 – Parents/Stakeholder Meeting Slides