



Dog Kennel Hill Primary School
 East Dulwich
 London
 SE22 8AB

Tel: 0207 2741829
 Fax: 0207 9240735
 Email: office@dkh.southwark.sch.uk

Rotherhithe Primary
 Rotherhithe New Road
 London
 SE16 2PL

Tel: 0207 2371586
 Fax: 0207 2373653
 Email: office@rotherhithe.southwark.sch.uk



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Consultation Document for the proposed Hard Federation of Rotherhithe and Dog Kennel Hill Primary Schools

Consultation process

The consultation process for the Hard Federation of Rotherhithe Primary School (RPS) and Dog Kennel Hill Primary Schools (DKH) will start on 1 November. It will end *strictly* on Wednesday, 13th December at 3.30pm.

The process is prescribed in the The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012. These state that:

The governing bodies proposing to federate must jointly consider any responses to the proposals and each governing body must determine whether—

- (a) to proceed with the proposals for federation as published;*
- (b) to proceed with the proposals for federation with such modifications as the governing body consider appropriate; or*
- (c) not to proceed with the proposals for federation.*

The modifications referred to in (b) may not include a change in the identity of the governing bodies proposing to federate.

The Governing Bodies of both schools will meet on 14th December to consider all the responses received as part of this consultation process and come to a formal decision about whether or how the Hard Federation should proceed.

If the decision is to proceed (with or without any modifications to the proposals for Federation), the current proposal is for the Hard Federation to start on 1st January 2018. This will be the date of the establishment of the new Governing Body, with existing Governing Bodies at both schools disbanding on 31st December, 2017. If the decision is not to proceed, the Soft Federation between the two schools will end on 31st December 2017.



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The Governing Body of DKH will be planning for future leadership of DKH in the event the Soft Federation is terminated.

This decision of whether to form a Hard Federation is the sole responsibility of the Governing Bodies. Once it has been made, the outcome will be communicated in writing to all parents and staff.

Background: December 2013 to the present

Following the sudden departure of the Headteacher of Dog Kennel Hill Primary School (DKH) in December 2013, the Governing Body of DKH entered into a discussion with Southwark Local Authority (LA) and received support for the school from various head teachers across the borough. Through the LA, DKH liaised with Rotherhithe Primary School (RPS) to discuss the possibility of RPS supporting DKH to help with some immediate changes.

Following this initial engagement, the Governors of both schools met and made the decision to form a Soft Federation between the two schools. They subsequently invited the Headteacher of RPS, Galiema Amien-Cloete, to become Executive Head Teacher of both schools with effect from 5th May 2014. The Soft Federation has now been in place for three and a half years. The Governing Body of DKH has advertised unsuccessfully for a new Headteacher six times during the past four years. This has been a common story for schools across the UK but especially in London. Had the school been successful in recruiting a Headteacher in any of the attempts, DKH School would most likely be looking at this time to form a relationship with another school. In the current financial climate, it is very difficult for schools to remain stand-alone and survive successfully and this is why many schools are looking to form partnerships, whether Soft Federations, Hard Federations or Multi Academy Trusts.

The Governing Body of DKH has explored options for forming relationships with other local schools, including joining a Multi-Academy Trust. The conclusion has been that, given the success of the Soft Federation with RPS in turning the school around from its low point in 2013, it was in the best interests of the children to enter a consultation process for a Hard Federation with RPS. This would effectively make the Soft Federation, which is a temporary measure, permanent.

An approach was made by DKH Governors to the Governing Body of RPS, who agreed that a Hard Federation would benefit all the children in both schools. The Governing Bodies formed a Working Party which took advice from schools who entered into a similar process and established a hard federation, Southwark HR, Southwark Local Authority and the Head of Governor Services to draw up this document for parents and staff as part of the formal consultation process.

What is a Hard Federation?

A Hard Federation is a formal agreement between two or more schools to work together on a permanent basis. The partnership of the two schools is led and managed under the direction of a single Governing Body including representatives of both schools. However, each of the schools in the federation receives their own school budget, receive separate Ofsted inspection reports and has separately published results.

For the DKH and RPS Hard Federation, both schools would remain local authority maintained schools.

It is possible for a Hard Federation to be dissolved if the Governing Body decides it is in the interest of the children to do so.

How would this be different to the Soft Federation of DKH and RPS?

A Soft Federation is temporary arrangement while a Hard Federation is permanent. One of the drawbacks of a Soft Federation is that its temporary nature does not allow permanent contracts to be issued to some staff and can deter new staff from joining, owing to the uncertainty of the future leadership. The proposal for the RPS and DKH Hard Federation would strengthen the existing Soft Federation in the following ways:

- One joint Governing Body for the Federation would have a strategic overview of the whole of the two schools from Nursery to Year 6, including RPS' Daycare Centre
- The opportunity for longer term planning.
- A permanent appointment of an Executive Head Teacher overseeing the work of the Federation.
- Permanent appointments of two Heads of School managing the day-to-day running of each school and other Leadership Team members for both schools
- Opportunities for extending the current arrangements for sharing staffing, expertise, resourcing and administration.

It is proposed that all the leadership appointments would be of the existing leadership staff in those positions and any contracts that are currently temporary would be made permanent.

Aims of the Hard Federation of DKH and RPS

In bringing together these two schools we will build on the strengths of both. DKH and RPS are value-based schools and there are close similarities between the two sets of values:

DKH – Creative, Aspirational, Respectful, Empathic and Resilient.

RPS – Caring, Courageous, Ambitious, Resilient and Empathetic

These values will continue to be central to day-to-day life at DKH and RPS.

Children are at the heart of all that we do at RPS and DKH. Below are the core principles underlining the work we do now and upon which the Federation would build:

- A commitment to ensuring that children at Federation schools are provided with high quality learning experiences. They will have access to a broad and balanced curriculum taught by qualified, good and outstanding teachers.
- The schools will continue working to providing a positive, safe, and stimulating environment where children can learn.
- Continue to be schools and communities that value diversity and enable children to celebrate their differences and achieve great things by working together.



- Learning should be enjoyable, allowing children to achieve their potential and helping them become lifelong learners who are ready and able to grasp opportunities.
- Staff in the Federation should be lifelong learners too, always looking for ways to develop their skills for their own benefit and for the children they work with.
- The schools will continue to promote the emotional, moral, spiritual, and physical development of the children at the school.
- We will work in partnership with outside agencies and our communities to ensure ongoing development and learning.

What are the benefits for both schools?

- The relationship that has developed between the schools has worked well and has been very successful in improving many aspects of life at DKH over the past three years. The relationships and shared practices are well established. The intention is that the HF would build on that experience to the benefit of children at both schools, not to develop a new approach to federation.
- Within the Soft Federation, DKH and RPS have both maintained their unique identities, ethos and characters in this partnership. Moving into a HF would be an opportunity for each schools to build on this.
- There can be a single shared vision, equality of provision and expectations across both schools set by the Governing Body with the Senior Leadership teams of both schools.
- The advice the Governors have received from the LA and from other federations suggest that academic achievement should be enhanced in the schools working in a HF.
- The Senior Leadership Team structure for both schools would be expected to become stronger and increasingly effective given it would be permanent. There would be improved capacity of the schools' leadership in the event of illness or leavers by having a larger leadership team.
- By sharing resources, provision could be improved for the children, particularly for arts, music, languages, sport and special educational needs and disabilities provision. This would result from the schools sharing good practice, each school learning from the other.
- The HF is an attractive option for teachers and support staff looking for a new challenge while providing wider opportunities for professional development for the staff of each school. These improved opportunities could help with recruitment and retention of staff.
- The Federation would provide both short and long-term stability in leadership and staffing for both schools.
- The schools can build on established shared approaches to classroom practice, such as marking and assessment, to allow staff across both schools to collaborate effectively. This would help improve and maintain standards in both schools.
- There is the opportunity to extend extra-curricular clubs across both schools using shared resource and expertise.
- There can be sharing of Safeguarding practices, procedures and processes.
- There are great opportunities for support services in both schools. This includes information technology support that is linked between both schools, administrative staff supporting each other and, in some cases, working across both schools, and making financial savings and increasing efficiency by sharing purchase contracts.

What are the risks for both schools?

There are risks involved in any change. None of the risks below are completely new. All have been tested already to some extent.

- The schools struggle to form a cohesive Governing Body covering the interests of both schools and maintaining the ethos and key attributes of one or both schools. NB. The two schools would have equal representation of staff and parents on the joint GB.
- The HF does not build strong local connections and does not meet community need.
- There is a difference of culture in the two schools which stifles or prevents effective co-operation.
- The leadership changes in the future and this changes the nature of the federation. NB this is also true if a new Headteacher is appointed to any type of school.
- The financial economies of scale do not materialise. NB This would not leave either school worse off than where it stands currently.
- One school receives more attention from the Executive Headteacher than the other. NB It is the GB's job to hold the Executive Headteacher to account for their actions and effectiveness and ensure they are spending the appropriate time at each school depending on the needs of the schools at any one time.

How similar or different are the two schools?

There are extremely strong similarities in the profiles of the pupils and families in both schools as illustrated by these data. However, there is a significantly larger proportion of the pupils receiving Free School Meals at Rotherhithe.

	DKH	Rotherhithe
White British pupils	36.1%	37%
Caribbean pupils	12.1%	7.8%
African pupils	24.8%	25.3%
First language English	55.4%	53.4%
Free School Meals	8.2%	27.1%
Special Educational Needs	15%	16.5%

Both schools have a strong sense of achievement as learning communities and the Federation aims to further enhance this. RPS and DKH share the high-quality Music and Spanish providers that were introduced through the Soft Federation. DKH offers PE and sport lessons taught by a qualified PE teacher whilst RPS uses a coaching company to deliver sport and PE sessions. Both schools offer a range of extra-curricular activities for children to enjoy and achieve.

Important to note is that as stated in our vision, there is **unity in our diversity**. The Federation aims to bring the two rich and diverse learning communities together to collaborate and further strengthen the foundations laid by the Soft Federation's partnership.

What is the proposed structure of the single Governing Body?

The proposed size of the Governing Body of the Federation is 12. This is in line with current recommendations for Governing Body size and follows certain statutory requirements for the make-up of the Governing Body. The proposed new Governing Body would comprise:

- The Executive Head Teacher
- One Local Authority Governor (nominated by the LA and appointed by Governors) – this is a statutory requirement
- Two Parent Governors – one Parent Governor elected by the parents of each school in the Hard Federation. This is a statutory requirement.
- One Staff Governor – elected by the staff in their school. This is a statutory requirement.
- 7 Co-opted Governors, appointed by the Governing Body, from the following sources:
 - One Co-opted Governor – chosen as a result of Staff Governor elections that ensure that, together with the one Staff Governor, there is a staff member from each school on the Governing Body. Should that staff member subsequently cease to work at the school, they must resign as a Co-opted Governor.
 - Two Co-opted Governors who are parents, such that there are two parents from each school on the Governing Body. They would be chosen by the Governing Body based on applications received and as identified through a skills audit.
 - Four Co-opted Governors – appointed by Governors, based on the needs of the Governing Body as identified through a skills audit.

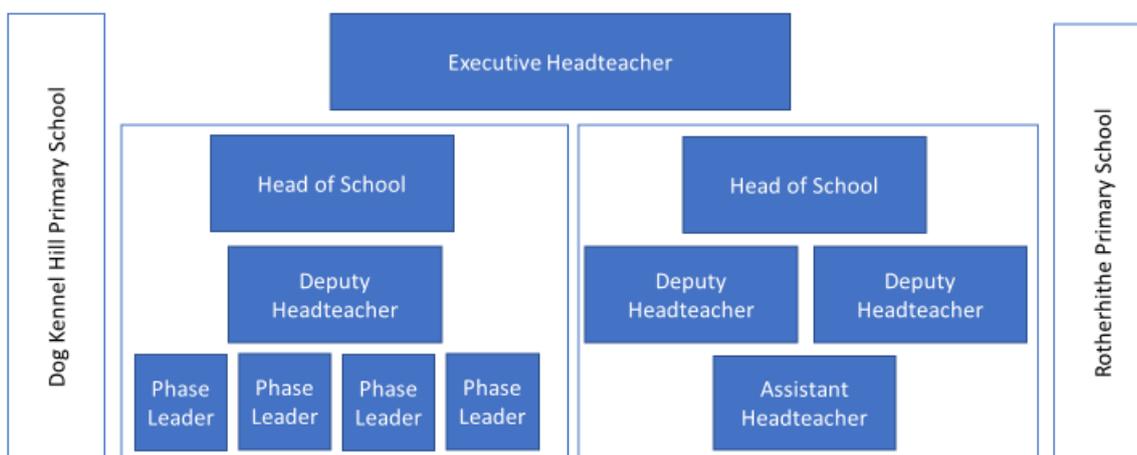
The Heads of Schools would become Associate Members of the GB. The GB would reserve the right to appoint other Associate Members to contribute specifically on issues related to their area of expertise. The Governing Body would accord Associate Members limited voting rights on committees.

A skills audit of the existing Governors would be carried out to help appoint the new Governing Body to ensure it is as strong as it can be and representative of both schools and both communities.

What is the proposed Senior Leadership structure?

There would be an Executive Headteacher leading the Federation on a strategic level and working with the Leadership Teams depending on the requirements of each school at any one time. There would be a Head of School and key senior staff based in each of the two schools who would manage those schools on an operational, day-to-day basis. While assigned to one school, those senior staff would be expected to work across both schools where appropriate and where expertise and strengths can be shared. The Governing Body and the LA will work closely together, as it has in the past three and a half years, to ensure that the Leadership Team is appropriately supported.

The structure of the leadership teams in the two schools is currently slightly different, based on the needs of each school. There is no proposal to change this.



How would it affect staff?

It is not anticipated that many staff members would experience significant change in their day to day work. Governors believe a new venture such as this is an attractive option for teachers and support staff looking for a new challenge while providing welcome professional development opportunities for the staff of each school. As a Federation, the schools could continue to recruit extremely well, attracting high-impact and talented staff with the added benefit of opportunities to work across both schools. The Federation also provides long-term stability in leadership and development of both schools. There will be no changes to the conditions of service for existing staff.

Is there a risk that one of the schools would lose out in this arrangement?

No. The aim of the HF is for the schools to work together in a full and equal partnership to continue to grow stronger together. The structure of the HF will enable staff members’ time and the benefits delivered by the HF to be appropriately and fairly shared across both schools. The single combined Governing Body would ensure each school’s interests were *fully and equally* represented and would be better placed to serve the strategic development of both schools. It is proposed that there will be equal parent and staff representation on the Governing Body from each of the two schools.

Would the schools keep their name and identity?

Yes. Each school will keep its own name and identity but there will be a separate name for the Federation.



Would the uniform policy remain the same?

Yes. Both schools will maintain their own policy regarding uniform i.e. Rotherhithe has a uniform but DKH does not.

Would the admissions arrangements remain the same?

Yes. Southwark's admissions policy will continue to apply to both schools and is on our websites.

Would pupils be registered to the Federation or a single school?

Pupils will be on roll at a single school.

Would parents and staff be equally represented from both schools on the Governing Body?

Yes. The proposal is for one staff member from each school and two parents from each school.

Would each school keep its own budget?

Yes. Each school will receive its own funding, manage separate budgets and keep separate records of its accounts. The two schools will share the costs or combine purchasing if this means that they will be able to get better value for money.

Would the amount each school receives be affected by the Federation?

No. All school budgets are worked out using a formula based on pupil numbers for the individual school.

Would the Federation combine their SATs results?

No. Results will continue to be attributed to the individual schools.

Would the Federation be inspected by Ofsted?

No. Each school will have separate Ofsted inspections and be graded separately, as they are now.

Would one school take the lead over the other?

No. The schools will continue to collaborate and work together as equal partners. The single Governing Body will have equal representation from each of the two schools.

Would the Federation meet the different needs of the two communities?

Yes. As both schools will have their own Head of School, key staff and safeguarding team, each school's differing needs would be separately met. There would continue to be separate parent, pupil and staff voice. There would be equal representation of the two communities on the Governing Body.



If I have questions or wish to comment on the proposal, what do I do?

There will be three ways for RPS parents to ask questions or put your views to the Governing Bodies. The same options will be available for parents at DKH with meetings at slightly different times:

1. There will be a meeting for all parents and carers on **Thursday 16th November at 6pm** at RPS where there will be representation from the school leadership team and the Governing Body.
2. There will be three drop-in meetings for parents, where there will be some Governors and School Leadership Team members, at the following times so we hope all parents who wish to attend will find an occasion to suit their timetable:
Thursday 9th November at 9am
Tuesday 28th November at 3.30pm
Wednesday 6th December at 5.30pm
3. If you would like to make a representation in writing to the Governing Bodies, please submit it to: consultation@rotherhithe.southwark.sch.uk. Alternatively, address it to the Chair of Governors and hand it to the school office of either school. All submissions should include your name, the name of your child (if you have more than one child in the school, you only need to name one) and their class.

Please make any submissions *strictly* by 3.30pm on Wednesday, 13th December 2017. No submissions will be accepted after this time.