



Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate New King's and Sullivan schools on the New King's site

Report on the consultation findings

1

Introduction

This report contains the findings from a range of consultation activities designed to gather feedback on the proposal to amalgamate New King's and Sullivan primary schools on the New King's Road site.

The consultation process ran for a period of 12 weeks, from 16 July to 8 October 2013 and comprised the following activities:

- Stakeholder feedback survey (consultation leaflet with response form, plus online consultation on the lbhf website)
- Public meetings for parents and stakeholders at both schools
- Meetings for staff at both schools

There was a very high level of interest in the consultation. Many responses were received, some 3,681 in total. Divergent views emerged and strong opinions were voiced both for and against the proposal.

The number of respondents disagreeing with the proposal outweighed the number agreeing. The views registered via the stakeholder survey were

- **1367 agreed with the proposal to amalgamate the schools;**
- **2226 disagreed.**

However, a majority of parents responding to the consultation agreed with the proposal – 1,107 agree compared to 1,036 who disagree.

Additional emails and letters were fairly evenly balanced for and against. Several submissions were received, including one from each of the two schools concerned: Sullivan opposing the proposal and New King's supporting it. Two petitions expressing disagreement with the proposal were delivered by representatives of Sullivan. The petitions carried a total of 3604 signatures.

Representations disagreeing with the proposal were received from: Sullivan Primary School, PRARA, The Fulham Society, City Events Ltd. the Polo in the Park organisers, H&F Liberal Democrats, The Executive Board of the Fulham College Academy Trust and the NUT. Several different submissions came from Hurlingham and Chelsea including one from Phil Cross as Head, plus another from the staff body, with 59 signatories formally objecting to the proposal. The response from the governing body expressed concern at the proposal to locate a new boys' secondary school so close to Hurlingham & Chelsea. The Chair of Governors wrote in a personal capacity that he supports the principle of the amalgamation of New King's and Sullivan schools.

Hurlingham District Residents Association expressed concerns about the impact on the local area and requested a survey. A meeting has been arranged.

APPENDIX C - 1

Favourable submissions (agreeing with the proposal) have been received from the Chair of Governors and Headteacher of New King's and from Greg Hands MP.

The Q&A sessions at the two public meetings demonstrated the strength of feeling of those who wished to retain Sullivan school in its current form, as did the meeting for Sullivan staff, who voiced their loyalty to the school and Headteacher and expressed their concerns about the implications for them.

A separate meeting for staff of New King's was held and the school organised a further informal forum for its own parents.

Two deputations were received. The first, from Ms Donna Fine, made to the Cabinet meeting of 2 September 2013, sought the extension of the consultation period. The Cabinet listened to Ms Fine's concerns but was unable to accede to the request. The second deputation was received on Thursday 12 September 2013 requesting that the Select Committee suspend the consultation. At the Select Committee meeting on 17 September, the deputation was put forward by Rosie Wait, Chair of Governors of Sullivan Primary School and Dr Philip Cross, Headteacher of Hurlingham & Chelsea Secondary School. The Chairman noted that there was not a report before the Committee for that meeting and no decision as yet to scrutinise, but it was resolved that: the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Education would discuss the comments made and send a joint response within seven days and the minutes of the meeting be submitted as part of the consultation.

A large number of requests for information were received. Questions raised in the course of the consultation were answered in the regularly updated online FAQ document, final version at Appendix 2, as published 17 September 2013.

More detail of the consultation activities and findings can be found in the main body of this report and the appendices:

Appendix 1
Consultation document

Appendix 2
FAQs

Appendix 3
Notes of public consultation meetings
3a) New King's 3b) Sullivan 3c) New King's parents' forum

Appendix 4
Minutes of staff consultation meetings
4a) New King's 4b) Sullivan, with Q&A factsheet

Appendix 5
Submissions received

Appendix 6
Deputations

Appendix 7
Cross section of the comments made by respondents

2

Context

New King's and Sullivan are both stand-alone, maintained community primary schools. New King's Primary offers 30 full time places per year, Sullivan Primary offers 45 places. Both schools offer early years/nursery provision.

New King's currently shares its site with Parayhouse School, a non-maintained special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. A Children's Centre also operates on the site.

New King's and Sullivan are relatively small schools, very close to each other and serving families from a similar area. Both schools are rated 'good' by Ofsted but are chosen by comparatively few families as their first or second preference school. Both schools have been hampered by unfilled places and the buildings require investment.

The surplus places at New King's and Sullivan suggest changes are needed to meet parents' preferences and to free up resources where they are most needed. Previous discussions between the Council and the schools exploring school reorganisation solutions to spare capacity issues came to nothing. Recently, however, New King's informed the Council of its plan to consult on converting to academy status working in partnership with Thomas's London Day Schools, a highly regarded independent schools group. The Council is supportive of its vision to become an outstanding and oversubscribed school.

The Council's view is that amalgamating New King's with Sullivan on the refurbished New King's Road site would target resources at one school, where the investment would provide a high quality environment for many years and a unique educational opportunity for LBHF children.

Combining the schools would reduce running costs and take advantage of economies of scale to improve facilities and learning experiences.

Bringing together these two schools, building on the best from each, would help the amalgamated school attract more families, fill current surplus places and provide a securer future. Accordingly, a Cabinet Member decision was taken to undertake a consultation exercise to gather feedback on the amalgamation proposal from parents/carers, staff, schools and the local community.

3

Consultation methodology

The Council wanted local people, particularly parents, and everyone at the schools affected to have their say about the proposal and the Council undertook a range of consultation activities to ensure they could.

A total of some 650 letters, accompanied by consultation materials, were sent to stakeholders seeking their views. Consultation letters were sent to all parents and carers of pupils at Sullivan, New King's and Parayhouse schools and to the Headteachers, Chairs and all staff and governors of the schools.

Individual consultation letters were written to: all Trades Unions representing staff at the schools; the local MP; the Councillors of the three affected wards (Sands End, Parsons Green & Walham, Town); the eight neighbouring Local Authorities; Head of SEN at Wandsworth, as the council maintains the statement of a pupil on roll at one of the schools; Head teachers of all Fulham schools potentially affected (nurseries, primaries, secondary's, specials and PRUs); the founders of Fulham Boys' Free School and the Directors of the C of E and RC Diocesan Boards for Education. A consultation communication was sent to all Hammersmith & Fulham schools via the Council's weekly School Staff Zone e-bulletin. Letters and copies of the booklet were also sent to Children's Centres in Fulham.

Sullivan, New King's and Parayhouse schools were asked to suggest any other stakeholders or special interest groups they felt should be consulted.

All requests for stock of the booklet with its integral response form were met: 7,000 were printed. Substantial supplies of the booklets were delivered to the schools for their own distribution. Over 3,000 booklets were provided to other local schools at their request. Fulham library displayed stock of the booklet.

In addition to the distribution of hard copy materials, participants were encouraged to visit the online consultation space, where they could keep themselves informed of developments, see the answers to questions raised during the consultation and register their views.

We have gone to great lengths to publicise the consultation. The consultation has, for example, been featured several times in the Council's 'Your Hammersmith & Fulham' e-newsletter, mailed to 42,000 subscribers. A press release was sent to all local media, including blogs, and was posted prominently on the public-facing lbhf website and the intranet for staff. The online consultation and supporting information was linked to the story and went live in the early hours of 16 July. Follow up releases were issued in the course of the lengthy consultation period. The Council's September issue of Buzz magazine, distributed to all schools and all pupils, 20,000 copies in total, featured a double page spread on the consultation, with a page of balanced "Your shout" vox pop opinions.

It was the Council's view that the lengthy consultation period (beyond that required) would maximise the opportunity for parents and local people to have their say.

It was felt to be to the benefit of all concerned to start the consultation as early as possible, though the Council recognised that some of the consultation period would fall within the school holidays. This was taken into consideration: Department for Education (DfE) guidance recommends that a consultation of this sort runs for a minimum of six weeks; the period allowed was 12 weeks, from 16 July through to a closing date of 8 October. If, following consultation, the decision were taken to go ahead with the proposal, statutory notices would be published in October 2013 for a further six-week period within which further representations could be made.

Stakeholder feedback survey

Consultees were encouraged to complete the survey questionnaire, designed to gain feedback on the proposal from parents/carers, staff, governors, local residents and other interested stakeholders.

A detachable response form was an integral part of the booklet detailing the proposal. The booklets were distributed widely, initially accompanied by letters to the staff, parents and carers of the two schools. The survey was also posted on the lbhf website alongside supporting consultation materials, with the form replicated as an online questionnaire.

Staff consultation meetings

Meetings with staff were held at each of the two schools. The meetings were arranged to discuss the proposal with teaching and support staff, to answer their questions about the implications and to gather their feedback. The majority of staff were able to attend. Trades union representatives also attended.

Public consultation meetings

Two public meetings were held, one at each of the schools:
 New King's School - Thursday 5 September 2013, 6.30pm;
 Sullivan School - Tuesday 10 September 2013, 6.00pm.

The events were well publicised and extremely well attended - in the case of the first meeting the doors had to be closed to latecomers when the hall was full to capacity.

The meetings were aimed primarily at parents and carers, but attracted local residents and other interested parties including education professionals and prospective Fulham Boys' Free School parents. The meetings followed the same format of presentations from a panel, followed by a Q and A session, interrogating the amalgamation proposal in more depth and generating feedback.

A third, informal meeting for New King's parents was organised by the school itself on the morning of 20 September, providing a more relaxed forum in which parents could ask questions and discuss any concerns. Again, feedback was noted.

Report

This report pulls together findings from all of the above consultation activities. The main body of the report contains a summary of the findings from each of the activities undertaken, as well as the individual written responses and submissions. More detail can be found in the appendices.

3a Stakeholder feedback survey

As part of the wider consultation exercise a stakeholder survey was conducted.

The survey was conducted in two ways: via a response form in the consultation booklet detailing the amalgamation proposal; as an identical online questionnaire, signposted prominently as part of the consultation web presence. The survey was designed to gain feedback from parents/ carers, staff, governors, local residents, local schools and other interested stakeholders.

The booklets were available in both schools as well as other information points. They were sent home with an accompanying letter to parents and carers of pupils at the two schools. Letters and booklets were distributed to teachers and other staff at the schools and to members of the schools' governing bodies.

Individual consultation letters were written to: all Trades Unions representing staff at the schools; the local MP; the Councillors of the three affected wards (Sands End, Parsons Green & Walham, Town); the eight neighbouring Local Authorities; Head of SEN at Wandsworth, as the council maintains the statement of a pupil on roll at New King's School; Headteachers of all Fulham schools potentially affected (nurseries, primaries, secondary's, specials and PRUs); the founders of Fulham Boys' Free School and the Directors of the C of E and RC Diocesan Boards for Education. A consultation communication was sent to all Hammersmith & Fulham schools via the Council's weekly School Staff Zone e-bulletin. Letters and copies of the booklet were also sent to Children's Centres in Fulham.

Sullivan, New King's and Parayhouse schools were asked to suggest any other stakeholders or special interest groups they felt should be consulted.

Every request for restocking of booklets was met, in total 7,000 were distributed.

Survey results

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposal to amalgamate New King's and Sullivan schools on the New King's Road site. The level of interest in the proposal was high, as was the response rate.

In total, 3,681 survey responses were received, 1,893 via hard copy response forms, the remainder as completed online surveys.

Additionally, 34 emails, 2 letters and 11 submissions were received within the consultation period.

The number of respondents disagreeing with the proposal outweighed the number agreeing. The views registered on the proposal were as follows:

1,367 Agree with the proposal

2,226 Disagree with the proposal

75 Don't know

13 N/A (unticked)

Responses disagreeing with the proposal

Disagree	Sullivan	New Kings	Other	Total
Parents	854	27	155	1036
Staff/stakeholders	123	5	116	244
Pupils	101			101
Other	615	13	217	845
Total	1693	45	488	2226

Responses agreeing with the proposal

Agree	Sullivan	New Kings	Other	Total
Parents	23	37	1047	1107
Staff/stakeholders	1	20	30	51
Other	2		207	209
Total	26	57	1284	1367

Key themes and analysis of views by category of respondent

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they are a parent/carer, teacher/staff member, governor, or 'other'. In the case of 'other', respondents were invited to further specify. Respondents were also asked whether associated with New King's or Sullivan and invited to explain the reason for their choice. The information provided allows us to drill down and give a breakdown of the opinions expressed by the categories of stakeholder.

The majority of parents responding directly to the consultation agree with the proposal. 1,107 parents agree and 1,036 disagree.

The vast majority of the respondents were LBHF residents, mostly of Fulham. Proximity was clearly meaningful for many who expressed concerns about the potential impact of building a secondary school on the Sullivan site.

Many of the relatively few respondents (127) living outside the local area stated connections with Sullivan - former staff or relatives of pupils or staff, for example. Some other external respondents to the online consultation survey were education professionals and stated opposition on grounds of principle. It was difficult to unpick which teachers were from LBHF or external schools as many chose not to state their place of employment.

The key reasons given for agreeing with the proposal can be summarised as:

- A well-thought through proposal that would offer cost efficiencies, provide improved resources for the pupils and generate additional funding.
- This will improve primary education choices in the borough, we need more excellent primaries, existing ones are oversubscribed.
- Fulham desperately needs a really good CE secondary boys' school.
- Makes sense to amalgamate two schools which are close and undersubscribed and free up a site for Fulham Boys School.

The key reasons given for disagreeing with the proposal can be summarised as:

- A cynical, ideologically driven exercise designed to free up a site for a free school.
- Sullivan should be supported not closed, it has an excellent Head and staff, is judged 'good with outstanding features', achieves very good results, is improving all the time and growing in popularity.
- Sullivan Primary School is a much loved and valued part of the community and provides a safe, nurturing environment for its children. Small and local is good.
- Siting a second large secondary school in an already congested area would have a detrimental impact.
- Sullivan has an established, green site that is ideal for a primary school, not for a secondary school. The New Kings site is on a main road and not ideal for young children.
- Closure of Sullivan would leave just one community primary school to serve the area, a school currently judged 'inadequate'.
- The Council's figures about surplus capacity, projected need for places and refurbishment costs are considered misleading.

The vast majority of responses, where a postcode was given, were from people living in the borough, or nearby. Only 127 responses were from postcodes from further afield. A large number of responses, 854, were received against the proposal from parents 'associated' with Sullivan school, in excess of the numbers of parents with children

actually attending the school, and from others 'associated' with the school (615) who were neither parents or staff.

Sullivan school had involved pupils and 101 pupil responses were received. Large numbers of responses were completed by people who were not local parents or staff; 284 in favour of the proposal and 869 against. 244 staff, governors and other school stakeholders were against the proposal compared to 51 in favour. It is worthy of note that there were 80 responses from one single "Three" mobile IP address, all anonymous and all definitely disagreeing with the proposal. It is possible that this resulted from large groups of people meeting together and submitting their responses, one after the other, on one mobile device, but the lack of identifying data makes this group of responses worth noting.

Many of those agreeing with the proposal described themselves as parent/carers with no association with either of the two schools. This applied to 1,047 respondents expressing agreement. The favourable responses are largely from those associating themselves with Fulham Boys' Free School. Many of these noted their affiliation with CE primary schools such as All Saints or St John's, noting that they are parents of primary aged children and keen to see a secondary CE boys' school. Relatively few of the respondents agreeing with the proposal commented on the amalgamation proposal itself, though some said it makes good sense to combine two undersubscribed schools, but almost without exception they expressed support for a new CE secondary boys' school and Fulham Boys' Free School in particular.

The majority of responses from New King's parents, staff and stakeholders favoured the proposal. A comparatively low response rate of 89 from New King's stakeholders, saw 57 agree and 32 disagree, see the chart above for details. Some, including most of the governors and several members of staff, viewed the proposal extremely positively. They saw the amalgamation as hugely advantageous, a way of improving resources and providing excellent educational opportunities for the pupils. Some parents welcomed the idea of a local free school secondary option. Others saw the change as too disruptive. Some staff relished the benefits they foresaw, definitely agreeing, while some were concerned for their own jobs and those of Sullivan staff, hence tended to disagree or did not know.

The vast majority of responses from those associated with Sullivan expressed disagreement with the proposal. Some 854 parents claiming association with Sullivan, plus 101 pupils, stated that they definitely disagreed. By comparison, 23 Sullivan-associated parents expressed agreement. Staff and governors were united in their disagreement, as were former staff and governors. The majority of other local residents associated with Sullivan school (615 responses) disagreed with the proposal. Other local stakeholders registering disagreement included businesses, clergy (one agreed, several did not), GPs, health and community workers. For the most part they viewed Sullivan as a very good school, good neighbours on a pleasant and appropriate site and were fearful of the potential impact of siting an 800 pupil secondary school in the already congested local area. Many respondents were critical of the suggestion that it would extend parental choice to replace a community primary school serving local children with a faith-based secondary free school. Many refuted the idea that

bigger was necessarily better and felt that Sullivan's size was an advantage. A common theme was the view that the Council was acting ideologically, aiming to shut the best of the local schools simply because it offered a prime site for a new free school. Those with current and historical associations with Sullivan expressed dismay at the potential closure of the school. The staff, the Headteacher and the education they provide were universally praised.

The vast majority of responses from people other than teachers and parents were against the proposal: 845 disagreeing and 209 agreeing. Local residents who are not supporters of the free school, not defining themselves as parents of boys at local CE primaries keen to see a CE boys' secondary, are almost without exception against the loss of Sullivan Primary and concerned about the potential impact on the local area.

Sullivan also submitted their formal response to the public consultation, three copies, each with five appendices (condition surveys and cost estimates), plus two photo books.

The formal response contested the key arguments made in the Council's consultation document and presented the case for the school's retention as a stand-alone entity. The reasons stated for the school's opposition to the proposal were given as:

1. The document is factually inadequate
2. Impact on education
3. Impact on community
4. Impact on local schools

The document outlined an alternative proposal: "that Sullivan Primary School applies for Academy Status in partnership with the protective and supportive group, the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS) as part of their Multi-Academies Trust."

The formal Sullivan response is attached in full at Appendix 5.

Additionally, Sullivan representatives delivered two petitions. One, 'Save our Sullivan', has 1,440 signatories. The phraseology used on the sheets describes the council as proposing to close the school and asks: 'Please sign our petition to help save our school'. The cover states: 'We are presenting this as part of the consultation procedure'. Of these, 376 (26 %) of the postcodes supplied were a considerable distance outside the borough or supplied no address. 970 of the signatories live in the borough. The remainder, 103, live in areas just outside the borough.

The other is an online '38 degrees' petition, which asks signatories to 'please help stop the proposal to close Sullivan Primary School' and claims 2,168 signatures. Of these, 1,089 (50.2%) of the postcodes supplied were a considerable distance outside the borough. 686 were within the borough and 393 were postcodes in neighbouring areas.

Submissions disagreeing with the proposal have been received from: PRARA, The Fulham Society, City Events Ltd. the Polo in the Park organisers, H&F Liberal Democrats, The Executive Board of the Fulham College Academy Trust and the NUT. Several different submissions came from Hurlingham and Chelsea including one

APPENDIX C 1
from Phil Cross as Head, plus another from the staff body, with 59 signatories formally objecting to the proposal. The response from the governing body expressed concern at the proposal to locate a new boys' secondary school so close to Hurlingham & Chelsea. The Chair of Governors, Stephen Greenhalgh, wrote in a personal capacity that he supports the principle of the amalgamation of New King's and Sullivan schools.

Favourable submissions (agreeing with the proposal) have been received from: the Chair of Governors and Headteacher of New King's and Greg Hands MP. The submissions are attached at Appendix 5.

A number of teachers/members of staff and Headteachers from other H&F schools expressed their disagreement, some voicing their disquiet about the LA's approach and their support for Sullivan's retention as a good community school. Ten of these were members of staff at Hurlingham and Chelsea and signatories to the Hurlingham and Chelsea formal objection, which was signed by 59 staff in total including the Headteacher, and expressed particular concern about the impact of siting a secondary free school nearby.

A cross section of the written comments provided by respondents to the survey is attached as Appendix 7.

3b Stakeholder consultation meetings

As part of the consultation on the amalgamation proposal two public meetings were organised by the council to gather the views of parents/carers, local residents and other key stakeholders:

- Thursday 5 September 2013, 6.30 - 7.45pm, at New King's School
- Tuesday 10 September 2013, 6.00 - 8.00pm, at Sullivan School

The events were well publicised and generated considerable interest. They were held at the schools themselves as this was felt the best way to make them accessible to parents, families and local residents. They attracted large numbers of parents, residents and other interested parties including education professionals and prospective Fulham Boys' Free School parents. Both meetings were extremely well attended and the audience participation, particularly during the Q&A sessions, demonstrated the strength of feeling held by many of the stakeholders.

An estimated 180 people were present for the first of the meetings, at New King's, but with the school hall full to capacity at the scheduled start time, safety issues dictated that some 50 more had to be turned away.

Those unable to gain entrance were reminded that there would be an opportunity to attend the next meeting, following the same format, a few days later at Sullivan Primary. An estimated 275 people attended the event at Sullivan. The larger hall and the exemplary preparation by the Sullivan staff allowed all those who arrived to participate in another lively meeting. It was agreed in advance that the meeting would be longer than originally scheduled to maximise the opportunity for the audience to question the panel and make their views known.

Both meetings followed the same format of a welcome and introduction from the host schools: by Andrew Fenwick, Chair of Governors for New King's and by Caroline Langton, former Chair of Governors for Sullivan School. In each case this was followed by presentations from:

- Andrew Christie, Tri-borough Executive Director of Children's Services, outlined the proposal and the purpose of the meeting.
- Ian Heggs, Tri-borough Director for Schools Commissioning, presented the Council's case for launching a consultation on the proposed changes.
- Miles Chester, Headteacher New King's Primary School and Tobyn Thomas, Principal, Thomas's London day Schools, presented New King's plan for moving to academy status in partnership with Thomas's London Day Schools.

At the Sullivan meeting, the panel included Chair of Governors Rosie Wait and Headteacher Wendy Aldridge, who spoke of their passionate opposition to the council's plans for the school.

After the presentations the meetings were opened to the floor. Questions to the panel were invited and frank exchanges of views followed. Questions at both meetings came largely from parents, staff and governors of Sullivan Primary. The first three speakers, however, all of whom spoke eloquently of their concerns about the proposal and its perceived impact, were: a local resident and ex-Headteacher; a member of the committee of PRARA (Peterborough Road Area Residents Association); then a teacher at another local primary school who exhorted staff and others to fight to defend community schools.

Another who spoke was Gary Piper, until recently Vicar of St Matthew's Church in Fulham and before that a teacher working in the ILEA for twenty years, including as Head of a primary school. As Vicar of St Matthew's Gary Piper took weekly assemblies in Sullivan School, said he had long and close associations with the school. He voiced his dismay and spoke in the cause of retention of the site, the school and the Headteacher.

Dr Philip Cross, Headteacher of Hurlingham & Chelsea Secondary School was another who expressed his concern, including around the impact of a new boy's CE free school: "My issue is that if you put that school here and you empty out Hurlingham and Chelsea, which is highly likely, what you will create is the schools of choice for some, but where do you go as a parent if you are choosing, mixed, multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, community education?" Dr Cross asked for the consultation to be withdrawn and revisited in six months' time, to allow a period of time for a group of education professionals to come up with one cohesive, properly considered plan for the south of Fulham.

The Council's justifications for the proposal were interrogated and contested in a series of questions addressed to Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Georgie Cooney, Ian Heggs and Andrew Christie. The lines of questioning and the strong support expressed for the school gave voice to the disagreement with the proposal summarised in the 'key reasons' list above, page 8.

Full notes of both meetings and the Q&A feedback can be seen at Appendices 3a & 3b. We are grateful to Sullivan Primary for sharing these comprehensive, verbatim notes, commissioned by Sullivan and prepared by the School Improvement Service's former Head of School Governance.

A third, informal meeting for New King's parents was organised by the school on the morning of 20 September, providing a more relaxed forum in which parents could ask questions, find out more about the proposal and discuss any concerns.

Approximately 35 parents were welcomed by Headteacher Miles Chester.

Andrew Fenwick, Chair of Governors, explained the reason for the meeting and outlined the background that had led to this consultation. He said that the governing body was very keen to continue the improvement seen over recent years and described how it had arrived at the planned conversion to academy status as Parsons Green Academy, in partnership with Thomas's Day Schools. He said the LA was supportive of the proposal, but said it was looking at solutions to the problem of spare primary places in south Fulham primaries and asked New King's to delay its consultation on moving to academy status in order for the LA to consult first on a proposal to amalgamate the two primary schools.

Miles Chester gave a presentation, saying that he wanted to keep it brief to give parents as much time as possible to ask questions. He provided a short outline of: the history and the timeline, of "where we are now" and plans for the future.

Parents were then invited to ask questions, which were answered by Miles Chester, Andrew Fenwick and Susanne Kelly, Deputy Headteacher.

The questions from the parents were largely about concerns around the implications for their children should the amalgamation proposal go ahead, leading to a Q&A conducted on an "If so, what happens?" basis, with several reminders from the panel that this was part of a consultation process and no decisions had been made other than their intention to proceed with the school's own academy conversion proposal.

Miles Chester described how the school would do lots of work in advance to build bridges and ensure a smooth transition for all pupils. He said there would be lots of familiar faces and continuity, but a great deal of planning would be needed, working on integration, the curriculum and the needs of each individual pupil. The key thing, he said, was to be well prepared and make this an enjoyable and positive experience for all the children.

The meeting was noted by Terry Broady, LBHF communications and information officer, to be included in the report on consultation feedback, see Appendix 3c.

3C Staff consultation meetings

As part of the consultation process, two meetings for staff were organised, one at each of the schools, each at the end of the school day:

- Sullivan Primary School, 11 September 2013
- New King's Primary School, 16 September 2013

The meetings were well attended by teaching and non-teaching staff, with trades union representatives invited.

At each of the meetings the respective Headteachers welcomed everyone and explained that the meeting was to discuss staffing implications should the proposed amalgamation of NKS and Sullivan go ahead. The panel outlining the position and responding in the ensuing Q&A sessions were:

Ian Heggs, Tri-borough Director for Schools Commissioning

Richard Stanley, Tri-borough Assistant Director for School Standards

Andy Inett, HR Relationship Manager

Ian Heggs and Andy Inett acknowledged that there was concern and uncertainty about the likely effect of the proposal on individuals, but Ian Heggs described the proposed changes as a very exciting opportunity to build on the strengths of both schools and offer the very best educational opportunities for our children.

All the staff affected had received letters from Ian Heggs stating that if, following the consultation exercise, it was decided to proceed with the closure of Sullivan and the expansion of New King's, detailed plans would be developed to implement a proposed new staffing structure, which would be the subject of further consultation early in the Spring term 2014.

Sullivan staff in particular voiced their concerns about their position, with redundancy as the necessary first stage and attendant uncertainty about retaining their jobs, their terms and conditions and the specialisms for which they were training or already qualified. Several expressed their dismay at the prospect of losing their highly respected Headteacher, also the likely reduction in the number of support staff posts overall compared to the current position in Sullivan and in New King's.

The meetings were noted to form part of the consultation feedback. At the Sullivan meeting, Ian Heggs and Andy Inett undertook to provide a factsheet covering the questions and the answers. The factsheet includes more detailed answers to some of the questions raised, for instance about maternity leave entitlements. The notes of the meetings and the factsheet are attached at Appendices 4a and 4b.

Appendices to consultation report follow - contents

Appendix 1

Consultation document

Appendix 2

FAQs

Appendix 3

Notes of public consultation meetings

3a) New King's 3b) Sullivan 3c) New King's parents' forum

Appendix 4

Minutes of staff consultation meetings

4a) New King's 4b) Sullivan, with Q&A factsheet

Appendix 5

Submissions received

Appendix 6

Deputations

Appendix 7

Cross section of the comments made by respondents