

Meeting for Sullivan staff – Q&A

Sullivan Primary School

11 September 2013

Notes of questions raised by Sullivan staff on the implications of the proposed amalgamation of Sullivan and New King's schools.

Answers to the questions were given by Council officers at the meeting and further information thought to help clarify matters has been provided in this document.

The panel outlining the position and responding in the Q&A session were:

Ian Heggs, Tri-borough Director for Schools Commissioning

Richard Stanley, Tri-borough Assistant Director for School Standards

Andy Inett, HR Relationship Manager

Approximately 40 members of staff attended the meeting. Trades Unions representatives present at the meeting included **Alex Reid**, GMB and **Dennis Charman**, NUT.

We are grateful to Sullivan Headteacher **Wendy Aldridge** and SAO **Judi Morgan** for sharing their minutes of the meeting, referred to here and a great help in ensuring the meeting content was captured accurately. The minutes detailed the introductory explanations that preceded the Q&A session as follows:

Wendy opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining that the meeting was to discuss staffing implications should the proposed amalgamation of NKS and Sullivan go ahead, forcing the closure of Sullivan. Reference was made, in particular, to a letter sent by Ian Heggs to Sullivan staff, which had been received a couple of days earlier.

Andy explained that if the closure of Sullivan went ahead, the next stage would be a consultation on the staffing structure for the expanded school, including the likely effect on staff. He confirmed that there would be a quite different structure in the new school with regard to support staff, in that it was unlikely that there would be as many support staff posts as at present. The consultation would be to determine the final staffing structure and was expected to last 30 days, starting from January 2014. Andy added that it was likely that some posts would be assimilated and, while some new posts would be created, having fewer posts in total would lead to redundancy in August 2014 for some staff.

Ian referred to the second page of the letter regarding academy status conversion. He stated that this would be a separate consultation led by NKS and would probably take place at the start of 2015.

Headteacher Wendy Aldridge then coordinated the **question and answer session**, inviting questions from her members of staff and TU representatives. What follows is the factsheet that reflects the Q&A session, with HR related answers expanded by Andy Inett where it was requested or felt helpful for staff.

Q&A FACTSHEET

Answers to questions asked by members of Sullivan staff at the meeting on 11 September 2013.

Q1: What is the process and the timeline for the consultation on the proposed staffing changes?

Ans1: If the proposal goes ahead, a 30-day consultation on the proposed staffing structure would start in January 2014 and run to mid-February 2014. A number of NK staff would be automatically assimilated into the new staffing structure. The overall picture was that some staff would be assimilated and some may be in line for new positions identified. Some of these new posts might be filled by way of competitive interview.

As there would be no immediate reduction in the number of pupils in the amalgamated school, there would be additional teaching posts in the new expanded school which would be available for Sullivan staff. The situation for support staff would be similar, except that the proposed restructuring for these roles would be likely to result in a reduced number of posts overall compared to the current position at Sullivan and at New Kings. However, it is still envisaged that a large number of support staff from Sullivan would have the opportunity for posts in the new structure.

The likely timescale for all these changes would aim to ensure that a final new structure would be confirmed before Easter 2014. The status of the amalgamated school at 1 September 2014 would be a community school.

It is recognised that staff affected wanted more clarity about the different implications for teaching staff and non-teaching staff. However, at this stage it is only possible to give an outline of how the process would work. The precise detail was still to be determined, following the outcome of the current consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools.

Q2: Who will make the decision regarding the staffing structure for the amalgamated school? As the new school is likely to be doubling the number of pupils, would it be reasonable to assume that there will need to be a significant number of additional support staff?

Ans2: Most support staff will have the opportunity to apply for a post in the new structure. The lead responsibility for the staffing structure will be the HT of the remaining school, who will be keen to work with the head teacher and senior leadership team at Sullivan. The changes in relation to the support staff structure would be in areas such as finance, IT support and site support.

Q3: In order to give enough time for redundancy notices to be sent out in accordance with contractual and statutory requirements, the recruitment process in the new structure would have to be completed sufficiently in advance. When is it envisaged that the new structure will be finalised?

Ans3: It is envisaged that the final plan will have to be agreed by around the end of March 2014, so that recruitment to the new structure could begin.

Q4: Is it possible that someone being appointed to the new structure could end up with a different job and pay scale?

Ans4: As the structure has not yet been drawn up, it was not possible to be precise. There could not be a guarantee that pay for all jobs would stay the same in the new staffing structure. Proposed job descriptions in the new staffing structure would have to be drawn up, followed by job evaluations where appropriate, before staff could be matched to posts. HR would support this process, providing professional advice to all parties.

Q5: Will teaching posts in the new structure be advertised nationally?

Ans5: Any vacant teaching posts in the new structure will be ring-fenced for staff from NK and Sullivan. The situation for support staff was less certain, because it may be necessary to advertise new roles externally. More clarity would be provided on this during the subsequent consultation on the proposed new staffing structure.

Q6: Will support staff in NK and Sullivan be required to compete for the same jobs?

Ans6: It is not possible to confirm this at present, because this will depend on the proposed new structure, which has not yet been drawn up. It is possible that this will apply in some cases.

Q7: What support is being offered to staff during this stressful period in order to protect their wellbeing?

Ans7: The school has some provision for supporting staff. In addition, the Council has a service which schools can access. HR will ensure that the support required is in place during the whole reorganisation process.

Q8: Will teachers in Sullivan currently in receipt of TLR payments be assimilated to equivalent management roles in the new structure and will they continue to receive TLRs at the same level?

Ans8: It is not possible to say at this stage whether teachers who are appointed to posts within the new structure will continue with their current management responsibilities. Where this is not the case, the salary protection arrangements under the terms of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document would apply.

Q9: Where new roles for support staff were different to the roles currently being carried out by support staff, what training opportunities will be provided, and what allowances would be made, to ensure that they had a good opportunity of securing these new jobs? . For example, some staff may have been trained to work specifically in the Foundation Stage and, if that were the case, then they should not be penalised if there were no Foundation Stage posts available in the new school.

Ans9: This issue will be addressed in the 30 day consultation period relating to the implementation of the new staffing structure, in order to ensure that support staff in this position have a reasonable opportunity to compete for any new jobs. When roles in the new structure are being established, they need to be looked at broadly enough to suit any member of staff who would be able to match up to most of what is required in the role and, with training, achieve all of it.

Q10: Will staff have to apply to jobs in the new structure (or in other schools where jobs were available) in order to be eligible for redundancy pay?

Ans10: If a new role in the expanded school was identified as being, say, 98% suitable for someone, they would be expected to apply for that post. Those who were identified as redundant as a result of the reorganisation would have the opportunity to be placed on the redeployment register, but that there is no requirement to opt for this. It followed that they could not be forced to take a job at another community school.

Q11: Will TUPE apply to staff transferred to the new expanded school?

Ans11: TUPE does not apply in relation to the transfer of staff to NK as it is currently a community school with the same employer as Sullivan. TUPE would only apply if NK became an academy. In these circumstances, staff would be transferred on their existing terms and conditions. Subsequently, of course, the Academy Trust – as the new employer – would be able to propose revisions to pay and conditions of service.

Q12: What will happen to those who are unsuccessful in securing a position in the new structure?

Ans12: In these circumstances, notice of redundancy will be given. The Council may say that anyone can express an interest in voluntary redundancy and request their figures, meaning staff could consider their options in an informed way. This would be an expression of interest only, so it would not mean either side was committed.

Q13: What process will be followed for those staff who apply for one or more positions in the new structure but are unsuccessful?

Ans13: By 31 August 2014, a member of staff who is unsuccessful in gaining a new post would already have been given 12 weeks' notice of the end of employment and will have had the opportunity of being placed on the redeployment register. In January 2014, if the proposed reorganisation goes ahead, there would be the opportunity to see what posts are on offer and to respond to the consultation. As a result of feedback, changes could be made to job descriptions before implementation. At that point, staff will be able to make an informed decision on whether to express an interest in a particular post. If staff are unsuccessful in their applications, they would not be forced to apply for a job elsewhere in the borough, but would instead be entitled to a redundancy payment.

Q14: How does the Council's redeployment register work?

Ans14: The Council has a good, active HR redeployment team who will help staff to prepare - advising on CVs for example - and direct them to vacant posts. Appointments to other schools would of course be handled by the school, not the Council.

Q15: Why is it not possible now to provide specific proposals about the new structure?

Ans15: The Council is trying to be as explicit as possible, but to go further would be inappropriate at the present time as the proposal was under consultation. A decision has not yet been made on the proposal. If the proposal does go ahead, the shape of the new school would be a conversation for December and the earliest that the details would be available would probably be January 2014.

Q16: Are there likely to be staffing cuts in 2016 and will teaching contracts in the new school be temporary or short-term to take into account reduction in pupil numbers (2.5FE to 2FE) from September 2016?

Ans16: The budget for the new school is unlikely to be vastly different from the current budgets that apply to the two schools, as the money coming in was based on the number of pupils: The new amalgamated school would have the opportunity to look at economies of scale and running costs.

Q17: Will the Council still be determined to amalgamate the two schools in some way if this proposal does not go ahead?

Ans:17: In the event that the proposal did not go ahead, the status quo would be maintained, but that there would be ongoing conversations about the issue of spare places. The Council sees the advantages of schools joining forces and, as another model, has encouraged federations.

Q18: Have other solutions been considered in relation to the rationalisation of spare places in primary schools in the Fulham area?

Ans18: The Council had a duty to consider the most effective use of resources. The Council could not afford to invest in 2 schools. Although Langford did have spare places, it was the only school in the area east of the Wandsworth Bridge Road. The new housing development planned near Langford is another factor which has to be taken into account.

Q19: Can an existing commitment to training support was guaranteed in the new reorganised school?

Ans19: Staff are not being asked to make any decisions immediately regarding the detail of future roles and future staffing structures. The question of guaranteeing existing training arrangements would be a matter for consideration once the new structure has been implemented and existing staff have been considered for roles in the new structure.

Q20: What would be the position of someone on maternity leave on 31 August 2014 who is identified as redundant?

Ans20: If someone is on maternity leave now, they are part of the staffing consultation process. If, after the consultation period has concluded and as a result of the implementation of the new structure, anyone on maternity leave is made redundant every effort would be made to find a possible new post in another school – but the Council cannot compel another school to appoint them.

Q21: Will current jobsharers have the same opportunity to continue jobsharing at the new school.?

Ans21: Job sharers would have the same opportunity, as it would be the same as one person doing the job. Job descriptions would make it clear whether a post was suitable for jobsharing.