

# Appendix 7 – cross section of comments

## 'Definitely agree' comments

A very large number of parent/carers not associated with New King's or Sullivan said this, or variants of this:

*Desperately need a CE secondary boys' school. Supporting Fulham Boys' School.*

This response is similar to many provided, from an All Saint's parent:

*I think it is an excellent use of resources, cost effective & really good for all of the pupils affected! They will have new/modern/state of the art teaching tools and resources that can be nothing but amazing! As for Fulham Boys school, it is brilliant that there will be a Church of England school for boys that offers a parallel to Lady Margaret for girls! It is exciting and again it's new building and resources status is extremely attractive to a lot of Fulham residents who currently have no options as to how to secondary educate their boys in Fulham! It's VERY exciting and appealing!*

Another primary CE school parent commented:

*Looking at the figures for both schools it seems clear that it would be better to have one bigger school that can get more financial investment so as to provide better education and more choice for local parents.*

Another respondent explained:

*I am a friend of a parent who is desperate for her two boys to go to a good secondary school which there is not in SW6 or W6 area.*

A governor commented:

*I am very conscious of the high proportion of our pupils who have English as a second language and who are on free meals - roughly half the cohort. The school is currently too small to guarantee these kids the fullest range of educational and cultural opportunities: we positively need to be bigger. All my contacts with the Head and senior staff convince me that together they constitute an ideal team to bring off this amalgamation to the satisfaction of all concerned.*

Another New King's governor listed reasons for supporting the proposal:

*Local primary schools struggling to fill places - demographic changes to locality.*

*Large/prohibitive capital costs associated with refurbishment of Sullivan.*

*Exceptional school building at NKS - underutilised currently.*

*Exceptional school leadership now at NKS with a head capable of true leadership and possessing, crucially, diplomacy and sensitivity.*

*The collaboration with Thomas's London Day Schools provides a real opportunity to learn off established school network who appear truly willing to help.*

*The Free School on the Sullivan site will, in time and if managed well and executed properly, be a bonus for the area in the medium to the long term.*

*The changes have the potential to provide the basis for truly great education in the borough.*

A member of New King's staff simply commented:

*It has the potential to make both schools 'outstanding'.*

Another member of New King's staff said:

*I am very happy with the proposal and look forward to all the developments and success it will bring to the school.*

Relatively few Sullivan parents agreed with the proposal, but one of those who did said:

*This seems the only logical and viable solution!*

Another Sullivan parent who agreed said:

*We have a son and would definitely want to send him to Fulham Boys Free School.*

A New King's parent said:

*Would be a great opportunity for all the children and would love the Boys Free School.*

A local Reverend Canon gave his reasons for definitely agreeing:

- 1). *To provide a better resourced & funded two form entry primary school*
- 2). *To free up a site which could be used for Fulham Boys school.*

### **'Tend to agree' comments**

From a New King's teacher/member of staff:

*I feel that the combined resources (staff, new renovated building etc) could ultimately benefit all of our pupils.*

Another New King's teacher/member of staff said:

*Not very sure what the future holds for staff, but boys' school is a good opportunity for the area.*

Another said his reasons for definitely agreeing were:

*NKS need an increase of pupil, so 2 form entry is needed. NKS needs to be refurbished throughout, so this funding is wonderful and very much needed. It is just a real shame that a 'Good' school (Sullivan) is closed just because of where it is currently situated.*

A New King's parent said (edited extract):

*In the long term it seems a better thing, but I am very concerned about the learning environment in Sullivan School while New King's being refurbished. How such a small school will welcome so many students? How will the learning environment be sufficient and not affect children's studies? Will the students have access to proper equipment and facilities? I am concerned, however I know there is little we can do to stop the process to happen.*

A local resident wrote:

*I attended the meeting at Sullivan School on 10th September, which gave me the opportunity to hear eloquent arguments opposing the proposal. Like many of the speakers, I have no association with Sullivan School other than that I pass it almost daily. As a local resident I would find it astonishing that a secondary school for 800 boys could be accommodated on a site ideal for half that number of primary pupils. The increase in traffic, including coaches, and the loss of Sullivan's garden, such a welcome open space in a congested area, would be detrimental to the character of the district, and impractical. I feel that greater efforts should be made to find a site for the free school elsewhere in the borough. I have no objection to a new secondary school for boys, although I remember the council closing St Mark's some 15 years ago. Sometimes decisions seem to be taken to satisfy a short term need rather than with a view to the future. I would be reassured if there were at least one other alternative site considered for the free school so that the decision about Sullivan could be taken without the suspicion that the free school (or Thomas's indeed with its academy plan) is dictating its fate.*

A local vicar wrote:

*Sullivan is a good school on an excellent site providing a creative, exciting curriculum. The children are happy and the staff are dedicated and very professional. The school is situated by the Sullivan Estate, the perfect position to serve the children of the residents.*

*The school garden provides opportunities for the children few other schools in the borough can equal.*

*Being totally on one level makes the school an excellent facility for SEN pupils.*

*Moving to New Kings would mean placing the children in an environment where there is a higher rate of pollution.*

*The move would be disturbing for young children and this would have a detrimental effect on their education. The move itself would be preceded by some disruption as pupils from New Kings would have to move temporarily into Sullivan whilst the NK building was modified.....can you imagine the tensions not only between pupils, but also between staff?*

*The plight of the Sullivan staff is a further problem particularly when it comes to the head Wendy Aldridge. That an excellent head should be made redundant when her school is successful is staggering and that it has come about is simply wrong and unworthy of this or any other authority.*

*My observations on the school and staff are not made merely on emotion. I taught for 20 years in the ILEA, including 8 as a primary school head teacher*

A parent wrote:

*I chose to send my child to Sullivan primary as the staff were so incredibly caring and dedicated, the buildings are low, light and airy and it has lots of fantastic green space which is a rarity for a school in the area. The parents of all the pupils at Sullivan are very passionate about their school and want to see it continue on its path of excellence.*

*If Sullivan is closed, it reduces our choices as parents, of secular state primaries in the area. This is a school that is much wanted and loved by the local community and it is at*

once both horrifying and unfathomable that our elected local government has Sullivan in its crosshairs, completely ignoring its citizens standing in front of them, with reasonable arguments against the proposal, and armed only with truth to counter every misinformed 'fact' trotted out to justify the destruction of a successful school. There is no justification for this.

#### A detailed response from a prospective parent and local GP:

*I write as a parent of a one year old child who I had hoped to send to a community school, in particular Sullivan, and as a GP living in Parson's Green. I have many friends who opt to send their children to private schools locally and am well aware of local parent perceptions around schools.*

*I have a number of issues with the council's proposal to merge Sullivan and New Kings schools.*

*Firstly, I believe that the issues at stake are individual and should not be linked. These are: (1) whether New Kings should become an academy, in partnership with Thomas'; (2) whether Sullivan and New Kings should be merged and (3) whether the proposed Fulham Boys School should be given the Sullivan site. Unfortunately, the way the council has gone about this consultation, the three have become inextricably linked in the eyes of the community.*

*(1) I do not object to and it is a matter for the governors of New Kings to decide as to whether this is in the interest of their school. My understanding is that they have done this and then proposed it to the council – fine.*

*(2) I object to the closure of Sullivan on the basis that (a) it may be undersubscribed as a whole school, but the foundation stage and reception and year one are, I understand, full this academic year – implying to me that perception of the school is changing and that it is becoming a school of choice for parents. (b) this is about parent perception – Sullivan is a 'good school' according to ofsted but parents have either not caught up with this, or else 'good' is not good enough. Given that Sullivan is a good school, surely it is better to work on changing parental perception rather than close Sullivan? (c) numbers – related to my point about parent perception: the council wishes to merge the schools as numbers are low. However, I am convinced that parents would be more keen to send their children to New Kings once it has a partnership with Thomas' – given how well respected this school is locally. Therefore the new school, merged with Sullivan as proposed, could quickly become oversubscribed. Surely the council would then have a lack of places? I know the council say that they have done the figures and that they won't [need] these 'spare' places at Sullivan and New Kings for all the new children likely to move in to the area with the planned housing developments locally, but I do not think the numbers add up.*

*(3) As a result of the council's linking of the 3 issues, Fulham Boys' School is being pulled into this mess and all the anger of Sullivan's supporters is being directed at them. This seems unfair given that they did not ask the council to close Sullivan – the council put 2 and 2 together and thought this would be a good solution to all 3 'problems' – without, it seems, necessarily thinking through the implications on each individually. The council is well aware that the boys' school would need a separate consultation anyway, but this is being pre-empted by the current one.*

*Finally this process appears to me to have been rushed.*

*I would urge the council to do the following*

*(1) allow NKS to become an academy, with likely growth in numbers and popularity.*

*(2) keep Sullivan school open and allow the slowly changing parental perception to*

catch up with the reality that Sullivan is a good and further improving school – a perception which can be seen to be changing by current numbers at entry level to the school.

(3) find another site for Fulham Boys School – I know this is proving very tricky, but this is not in itself a justification for closing Sullivan.

(4) as suggested at the second public meeting, allow the teachers and educationalists themselves to put their heads together and see what solution they can come up with for all Fulham schools, including this issue.

### **'Tend to disagree' comments**

The Headteacher of a community primary school in the borough registered a 'tend to disagree' position and commented:

*There are reasons for and against all the options. I would consider that the Sullivan site is a better site for a Primary School of the 2 school sites available. My thinking behind this is around the simple fact of space, outside learning, free flow opportunities and innovation in regard to the possibilities for how and where teaching and learning happens for young minds enabling a more creative curriculum and space to run.*

*As a Headteacher in the Local Authority I do have issue on the manner which process has taken place and hope we will get opportunity to discuss this at some stage in order to reduce the angst for others after this process has taken place (whatever the outcome).*

*I am concerned that the building of a Boys Free School linked directly to faith in Hammersmith and Fulham further reduces the options available for boys in particular for Secondary Transfer. My observation in the past few years is that the options available for the families attending [name of the school redacted] school for Secondary transfer are becoming smaller, with less families being satisfied with the options available or offered - especially for Boys. Local academy schools and free schools are tending to add to or temper admissions criteria with specialisms reducing options for all children. A Church of England Free School will limit the options further, apparently creating greater opportunity for some and in the case of [name of the school redacted] pupils a vast minority.*

A respondent describing themselves as 'a concerned parent' strongly disagreed and echoed the views of many in questioning the perceived conflation of issues around the amalgamation proposal:

*Shutting a good school that is inclusive in order to amalgamate it with another who are forming an academy with a private school chain to provide a site for a Church free school, is nothing more than a political decision. This is in no way a strategic plan to address any surplus places or in the best interests of the children at either primary. The Free school founders are lobbying parents up and down the borough, which they should not be allowed to do. This is neither Christian nor appropriate. I have serious concerns about the process and it should be stopped immediately.*

### **'Don't know' comments**

Many of the 'don't knows' expressed enthusiastic support for Fulham Boy's Free School, though some had reservations such as this:

*Not sure if these schools should be amalgamated, but definitely need a good secondary boys school in the area.*