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Proposed Hard Federation of Robert Browning, Snowsfields and Tower Bridge Schools

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Background – September 2018 to present

The Bridges Federation is currently made up of two schools, Snowsfields and Tower Bridge Primary Schools, who have now been in a Hard Federation since September 2015. This partnership has been extremely successful and has seen Snowsfields maintain its Good Ofsted rating and Tower Bridge move from Requires Improvement to a Good school with outstanding Leadership and Management, and Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare.

Robert Browning School appointed a new Headteacher to start in September 2017, however he only remained at the school for one year. Results have not been good enough over the last few years and the school was graded as Requires Improvement at their last Ofsted Inspection in November 2017. The Governors entered into a discussion with Southwark Education Department about the possibility of Robert Browning joining one of the existing Federations in Southwark and discussions started with the team from The Bridges about the schools working more closely together.

The Governors of both schools made the decision for Robert Browning to work in partnership with The Bridges Federation initially for a two year period and subsequently invited the Executive Head Teacher of The Bridges, Kate Wooder, to become Executive Head Teacher of all three schools with effect from September 2018. Also Sarah Manley moved to Robert Browning to become Headteacher. The Soft Federation has now been in place for 12 months and both governing bodies have decided to enter a formal consultation process towards the possibility of Robert Browning School joining the Hard Federation with The Bridges, to start on 26th November. This consultation is open to all interested parties in the schools and will end on Monday 11th November at 3.30pm.

What is a Hard Federation?

A *Hard Federation* is a formal agreement between two or more schools to work together. Through this proposal, a new Hard Federation would be formed. The Bridges Federation currently includes two schools and a third school would be added, led and managed under the direction of a **single** Governing Body. However, each of the schools in Federation would continue to retain its individual identity and school budget, as well as continue to receive separate inspection reports. This approach would ensure a single shared vision, equity of provision and expectations across all the schools; and enable pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The proposal to extend the *Hard Federation to three schools* would formalize and strengthen the existing partnership arrangement for reasons of the following: -

- One joint Governing Body for the Federation, which will have a strategic overview of the whole of the three schools from Nursery to Year 6;
- A formally appointed Executive Head Teacher overseeing the work of the Federation;
- Stability in Leadership and staffing;
- Further opportunities for shared staffing and resources going forward.

The proposed size of the Governing Body of the Federation is eighteen; one Local Education Authority Governor, the Executive Head Teacher, the Headteacher at Robert Browning, two elected Parent Governors, one elected Staff Governor and twelve Co-opted Governors. [The co-opted governors will include an elected member of staff from two of the schools and a parent from one of the schools, so that there is parity between the schools.] Other Leadership members would



become Associate Members of the Governing Body. The Governing Body reserves the right to appoint other Associate Members to contribute specifically on issues related to their area of expertise. The Governing Body will accord Associate Members limited voting rights on committees. Co-opted governors will be appointed on the basis of their skills so a skills audit will be carried out to ensure the Governing Body is as strong as it can be.

What are the benefits for both schools?

The capacity created by a Hard Federation would continue to help improve education for all pupils. All the advice the governors have received from the Local Education Authority and from other Federations, points to strong evidence that academic achievement will be enhanced from the schools working in Federation.

Governors believe that a Hard Federation significantly contributes to the sustainability of further improvement of each school without jeopardizing the other. There would be the ability to extend the sharing of resources, particularly for arts, music, languages, sport and special educational needs and disabilities provision, which would further enhance opportunities for pupils at each school.

Benefits so far of Robert Browning working in a Soft Federation with the Bridges (since September 2018)

- Extending proven strong Leadership to Robert Browning school
- Strategic Management covering all schools;
- Leadership Team working together and supporting all schools;
- Schools coming together for events;
- Children working together across all schools on our creative curriculum and enrichment projects;
- Staff sharing expertise across schools;
- Inclusion specialist supporting across all schools;
- Schools cross-fertilising good practice – each school learning from the other;
- Administration Staff supporting each other across all schools;
- Consistency of learning strategies across schools and marking;
- Evaluation of children's work made more consistent;
- ICT support closer linked between all schools;
- Sharing support staff skills and expertise across all schools (e.g. languages);
- Greater staff development opportunities;
- Extra curricular clubs across all schools;
- More learning opportunities for the whole community (children, staff and parents);
- Sharing purchase contracts with supply companies resulting in greater cost effectiveness and efficiency;

How will it affect staff?

Any change can be seen as upsetting the *status quo*. However, governors believe an exciting new venture such as this is an attractive option for teachers and support staff looking for a new challenge whilst providing welcome professional development opportunities for the staff of each school. As a Federation we would continue to recruit extremely well and attract high-impact and talented staff with the flexibility of working across both schools. There will be greater opportunities for all staff across the schools and the option to work in any of the three schools if they choose.

Who employs the staff of a Federation?

Staff will continue to be employed by each of the three schools, but managed by the single Governing Body. There will be no changes to the conditions of service for staff.

Is there a risk that the Senior Leadership Team will be too thinly spread?

No. The Hard Federation will have a strong Senior Leadership Team structure, working across the schools, with key senior staff based in each of the schools. The Governing Body and the LA will work closely together to ensure that the Senior Leadership Team is appropriately supported.



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

No. The aim of the Hard Federation is for the schools to work together in a full and equal partnership in order to continue to grow stronger together. The structure of the Hard Federation will enable resources to be appropriately and fairly shared across both schools. The single combined Governing Body would ensure each school's interests were *fully* represented and would be better placed to serve the strategic development of all three schools. It is proposed that there will be equal Parent and Staff Governor representation from each of the three schools.

Will the schools change their name and identity?

No. Each school will keep its own name and identity but there will be a separate name for the Federation, The Bridges Federation.

Will the uniforms change?

No. Uniforms will remain the same.

Will there be any change to admissions arrangements?

No. Southwark's admissions policy will continue to apply to both schools and is on our websites.

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

Pupils will be on roll at a single school within the Federation.

Will the schools share a single budget?

No. Each school will receive its own funding, manage separate budgets and keep separate records of its accounts. However there may be occasions when the three schools share the costs or combine purchasing if this means that they will be able to get better value for their money.

Will the amount each school receives change?

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

Will the Federation combine their SATs results?

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

Will the Federation be inspected by Ofsted?

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

Will 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 three schools.

See attached Time Line and letter to parents

