



Dame Kate Dethridge

Date: 24 March 2022

Dear Dame Kate,

**RE: Holland Park School Parents**

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Family Services Select Committee at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, to set out the conclusions and the recommendation of the committee members after listening to parents of Holland Park School students at the meeting of 21 March 2022.

In line with our scrutiny duty to listen to and to be the voice of our residents, time at the scrutiny meeting was arranged to give a group of concerned parents (the Parent Collective) the opportunity to speak, be heard and share their experiences of the processes affecting the Holland Park School. I have noted below what we heard from parents, and I invite you to listen to parents themselves [here](#).

At the meeting parents described their frustration, concerns and worry over a process that in their view would transform the character and ethos of their children's school –a much loved and respected school in Kensington — irreversibly. We heard from parents about a process that we agree happened too quickly, lacked transparency and was devoid of consultation. I have expanded on these points below and set out what we heard at the meeting:

- Only four months ago the school was issued with a Notice to Improve. Only one of the ten recommendations was for governors to consider joining a multi-academy trust (MAT). In that short time, trustees decided to join in a MAT and settled on which MAT to join. The trustees, moreover, quickly moved from one choice of MAT to another one earlier this month.
- Parents and students have been furnished with little or no information of the process followed and of the criteria developed by governors and trustees to firstly, decide to join a MAT, and secondly to choose which MAT to join.
- There has been no consultation or engagement with the school's key stakeholders: its students, parents and teachers. Parents feel left out of important decisions for the future of their children's school, and they wish to be involved in those decisions.

Having heard from the Parent Collective, from the Family and Children's Services Lead Member, Councillor Josh Rendall, as well as from councillors including those representing North Kensington wards, the Family Services Select Committee has unanimously come to the following conclusion and recommendation:

We would urge you to pause this process and ensure that parents and students are widely and adequately involved, engaged and consulted and their voices fully considered in any future option for the school.

The reasons for our recommendation are that:

- After the Grenfell tragedy the Council has recognised that our local communities require us to work with local people in making decisions that affect them. In line with the Hillsborough Principles, putting our communities first is a commitment by the Council, and our values include a commitment to put local people at the heart of decision making in everything we do.

This school serves our North Kensington communities. It is a shock to local people, and to us as councillors, to find that governors and trustees of Holland Park School are satisfied to simply follow a process which has no room for the communities they serve. We believe this behaviour has no place in our borough.

- There is a local bid developed by Kensington Aldridge Academy which made the long list of MAT partner-considerations by trustees but did not make the shortlist. We understand that this bid is a proposal which would be co-sponsored by the Council, and which would also count on the experience and expertise of Sir David Carter, former National Schools Commissioner. We think this proposal should be considered as an option with potential to strengthen the governance and financial management arrangements and to gain wide-ranging local support.
- We are concerned that, at this time of upheaval to the school and when parents have lacked a formal role in the process, the two parent-governor positions, which would provide parents with a voice in the decision-making process, are vacant. We take this opportunity to urge that elections for the two parent-governor positions are held speedily.

On behalf of my Committee, I thank you for your time and consideration of this letter and look forward to receiving your response for the benefit of our school community.

Yours sincerely

Janet Evans  
Chair of the Family Services Select Committee, RBKC  
Councillor, Courtfield Ward