



ALDERMAN BLAXILL SCHOOL

**PROPOSAL FOR HARD FEDERATION WITH
THE STANWAY / THOMAS LORD AUDLEY FEDERATION**

The Interim Executive Board of Alderman Blaxill School have voted to consult with students, families, staff and stakeholders about whether or not to join the hard federation of the The Stanway and Thomas Lord Audley schools, the federated governing body of which has voted to support the proposal.

If agreed this will mean that Alderman Blaxill School joins the existing “The Stanway and TLA Federation.”

The larger hard federation will bring benefits to all three schools as described later.

Hard Federation

The major difference with a hard federation is that there will be only one overall Governing Body (Management Board), rather than three separate groups; and that will appoint an Executive Head to provide professional leadership across the three schools. That governing body will give strategic direction and increasing alignment of policies, procedures and resources.

The staff will be employed by the single governing body, although they will be covered by the national terms and conditions of employment as now. Some resources and staff will be shared across the three schools, giving economies of scale.

If the schools form the hard federation they will still remain as individual schools, they retain their individual identities; they will set their own admissions policy, results will be published for each school, and their funding will be determined separately. It is a mechanism to reinforce collaboration and cooperation between schools. In principle, at a later stage, a school could withdraw from the federation subject to consultation.

Background

The three schools were part of a less formal soft federation for two years under the professional leadership of an Executive Head Teacher. In that time, both Alderman Blaxill and Thomas Lord Audley have moved out of special measures.

If the timetable set out later is followed it is proposed the hard federation will be operational from March 31st 2010.

The Case for Change

The future of secondary education in the locality has been the subject of extensive consultation and the outcome is that both Alderman Blaxill and The Thomas Lord Audley Schools will close on 31 August 2015. The last intake of students will be September 2010. It is generally accepted that Alderman Blaxill is not viable as a stand alone school and that, at least at present, Thomas Lord Audley requires some support, as currently offered through its hard federation with Stanway.

The closures are part of a wider reorganisation of secondary schooling in Colchester and the Education Authority has indicated it has secured Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding to expand Stanway and the five other secondary schools. Stanway will expand to take on more students from the Berechurch community and Philip Morant School will expand to take on more students from the Shrub End area. The Education Authority have agreed that there will be a five year interim period during which students already at Alderman Blaxill and Thomas Lord Audley schools in September 2010 will complete their education on those sites.

During this period much support will be needed to maintain the quality and breadth of provision for these students. The hard federation of the three schools will facilitate this and will bring stability and formalise the current informal arrangements.

Alderman Blaxill School will require well coordinated support in order to maintain an adequate curriculum range as numbers fall over the years prior to closure. Within the federation quality provision will be assured through secondment and sharing of staff and it would be possible to consider how best to make use of the Alderman Blaxill site, extending its use for other educational purposes as student numbers fall.

The Governors of the three schools have given full consideration to the future and believe that a Hard Federation is the best way forward whatever the final outcomes of how the Building Schools for the Future plans for funding are developed.

Organisation

There will be an Executive Head Teacher for all the schools, just as now, assisted by senior management teams, led at Alderman Blaxill by an Associate Head. Opportunities for career progression are expected to arise, involving movement of staff from one school

to another and some staff may be asked to take their specialist knowledge into the other school, so that best practice can be shared.

There will be a single Governing Body, or Management Board, made up of initially 28 Governors, including staff, community, local authority and parental representatives. Governors will not be representative of any component school. The Executive Head will also be a member.

Category	TSS&TLA	All three	2 years	5 years
Total	25	28	22	18
Parent	8	9	8	6
Staff	4	5	5	3
LEA	2	2	2	2
Community	3	3	2	2
Partnership	7	8	4	4
Head	1	1	1	1
Associates	5	0	0	0

Admissions

The academic year 2010 -2011 is Alderman Blaxill's last intake year for Year 7 pupils. Currently admissions are managed by the governing body of Alderman Blaxill School but on joining the federation, this responsibility will move to the federation's governing body. All schools in the federation are Foundation Schools.

Key Advantages of a Hard Federation

Formation of hard federations is becoming more popular and is part of overall educational policy. The key advantages of having a managed base of far greater numbers of students are:

Good coordination across the sites of the federated schools for the following five years

improved teaching and learning

a structured way for schools to collaborate, learn from each other and share best practice

improved senior and middle management, succession planning, joint appointment of staff and coherent training

joint staffing opportunities including Specialist Teachers and wider career opportunities across the federation

governance support and development

a cost-effective and coherent curriculum, increasing the opportunity to fulfil individual students' needs, extending curriculum entitlement.

models of good practice to improve teaching and learning and inclusion

cost effectiveness – economies of scale

a basis for further partnerships, including cross-phase and with other providers (eg. 14-19, community services etc)

saving on planning and administrative time

strategic planning, for example through the sharing of complementary specialisms

Answers to Key Questions

What's in it for the students?

With far more staff involved than at any single school there will be access to a much larger pool of skills and knowledge. Students will have access to more opportunities for good quality teaching and learning. Opportunities for sports, after school clubs and activities of all kinds will be enhanced through pooling facilities and resources.

What's in it for the staff?

Most day-to-day management will continue as it is now arranged, but there will be opportunities to collaborate, learn from each other and share best practice across the schools. Staff will be able to share knowledge with people from schools within the federation with similar challenges – this is very rare in education. We will be able to improve senior and middle management training and build the capacity to improve. Succession planning especially for senior posts, for which there is a national shortage of candidates, will become a reality.

What's in it for the parents?

The schools will become stronger, because when they co-operate, sharing good practice will enhance performance at all the schools. Better opportunities for learning mean that children can be helped to overcome barriers to learning because resources can be used more productively shared across the federation. The retention of quality staff will ensure a continued high standard of education for the students at all the schools. Parents will know that because we can share resources, their children will be getting the best opportunities for an excellent education.

Will the arrangements be fair to both schools?

The governing body of the federation will ensure that no school is financially disadvantaged. The budgets will remain separate. The Federation will become more cost effective through economies of scale and saving of planning and administration time.

What if we want to go back to separate schools?

The federation arrangement will be reviewed annually by its Governing Body. The federation does not take away the identity of the schools but they will have a single governing body. If at any time, the schools did wish to break up the federation, the case would have to be made and there is a standard process that would be set in place, which would include a six-week consultation followed by a final decision by the Governing Body.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

STATUTORY PROCESS FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGES:

Stage 1

The two Governing Bodies and the Interim Executive Board have considered the proposal by 23rd November 2009.

Stage 2

A proposal document issued to local stakeholders including but not limited to:

Local Authority (ECC)

Families, teachers and other staff at both schools

Students at the schools

Families at any other school that may be affected including feeder schools

Trade Union representatives of both school staff

The Learning & Skills Council

Members of Parliament for Colchester and North Essex

Local councils

Meetings will be arranged with staff, parents and the wider public to discuss the proposals.

Stage 3

Publication of proposals allow for at least a 6 week period for representations. The closing date for responses to the proposal is 31st. January.2010

Stage 4

Governors consider representations and decide whether to go ahead (determination of proposals). This must be within 6 months of the publication of proposals. The Governing Bodies and Interim Executive Board may withdraw published proposals at any point before they are determined. There is no maximum time limit between the publication of a proposal and the date of its implementation. The proposals contain a federation date of March 31 2010.

Stage 6

If the decision is taken to go ahead then the members of the new Governing Body are appointed and elected as appropriate.