

Proposal

To amalgamate St Jude's VA Primary School with Charlotte Sharman Foundation Primary School (CSPS) in the London Borough of Southwark, planning Area 1 – Borough, Bankside, Walworth to provide a 1 FE (form entry) VA school on the CSPS site.

At the beginning of the Full Proposal is feedback on the Stage 1 Consultation Outcomes, including the Governors' responses. A fuller version of this will be available in the Final Report to the Cabinet following Stage 2's Formal Consultation.

- It is a statutory requirement for the Proposer (in this case the Schools' Governing Bodies) to consult any parties they think appropriate before publishing statutory proposals.
- The Stage 1 consultation ran from 18/12/23 to 7/2/24 it involved engagement with stakeholders through
 - Public meetings with staff
 - Public meetings with Parents/Carers
 - A dedicated email address to collect views
 - Paper versions of proformas in schools translated into relevant languages
 - Documentation on the schools' websites of all letters / proformas/ information pertaining to the proposed amalgamation, translated.
 - Letters sent to staff/parents/carers
 - FAQs on both schools' websites

The table below outlines the methods used to gather views/information/comments from all stakeholders and community to maximise engagement.

Date	Location	Audience	Approx. Numbers
15/03/2023	St Jude's/CSPS	Presentation to Governors	
22/2/2023	St Jude's / CSPS	Staff Meeting	
24/2/2023	St Jude's / CSPS	Parents/Carers Letter	
09/03/2023	CSPS	Parents/Carers meetings X2	24
10/03/2023	St Jude's	Parents/Carers meetings X 2	31
17/05/2023	CSPS	Staff (NEU)	17
4+5 /07/2023	CSPS	1:1 meetings (Staff)	28

18/7/23	St Jude's / CSPS	Update letter to Parents/Carers	
09/01/2024	CSPS	Staff/Parents/Carers meetings X 2	34
11/01/2024	St Jude's	Staff/Parents/Carers meetings X 2	19

- The Governors recognised that the proposal and the consultation process would be unsettling for parents/carers, pupils and staff and have tried, therefore, to work closely with all concerned, including the LA and SDBE to keep lines of communication open and information as transparent as possible when available.
- Credit must be given to the Headteachers and staff who have worked tirelessly to remain positive, at a challenging time due to circumstances beyond their control.

Consultation Feedback.

There were 112 respondents.

- All categories of Responders from both schools are included in the Report Findings. In the feedback are points made from a letter sent by the NEU members at CSPA. There was also a response from Alasdair Smith, Director Children and Families, Southwark Children and Adult Services. (see under Theme 7 - Sustainability)
- **Question 1 – Which of the following best describes your interest in this Consultation?**
- Out of the 112 responses received the chart below outlines numbers in each category and which school they are from.

	CSPA	St Jude's
I am a parent / carer / guardian	70	18
I am a governor	1	1
I am a staff member	12	3
I am a child at the school	2	1
Other	2	2
Total	87	25

- **Question 2 – Do you support the proposal to amalgamate St Jude's and Charlotte Sharman Primary Schools?**

Yes	No	Undecided
25	83	4

Question 3 – If you like the proposal, please say why you think it is a good idea?

(The following comments are taken from respondents in all categories)

- Over 20 comments were made.
- They talked about the schools being stronger together, there being more room, more opportunities and more funding for resources for children to achieve better at school.
- Enhances academic opportunities due to larger student body and more social interaction.
- It will ensure the future of the two school communities in one new school
- Keeps the school for the families living in the locality.
- Great for both schools and a way the community can be strengthened too.
- Lots of comments were made about a stronger community bringing greater collaboration.
- Children will get to create new friendships as well as improving their educational prospects.

Governors' Response to Question 3

Governors agreed with many of the responses that referred to the opportunities an amalgamation could offer, while recognising the challenge and hard work that would be required to realise the potential strengths of both schools in one new entity. Concerns expressed need to be addressed as a matter of priority and establishing a targeted programme of engagement with all stakeholders would be a prerequisite to moving forward. Governors believe the amalgamation is the most viable option to ensure a strong primary school in this part of Elephant and Castle that offers as much continuity as possible to pupils, families and staff currently at Charlotte Sharman and St Jude's.

The following two questions 4 and 5, have been collated under recurrent themes as similar points were raised under both questions

Question 4 – If you disliked the proposal, please tell us why you are concerned?

Question 5 – Any other comments, issues or questions?

Theme 1 – Faith school / non- faith school (Over 67 comments)

- There were over 67 comments about this theme.
- Most responses centred around about having choice to send your child to your preferred school. Respondents felt that if they had wanted too then they would have chosen a faith school.
- Concerns around the multi-cultural and diverse nature of the intake at CSPA being changed.
- Concerns about Muslim children, halal food and Christian worship being forced on the children.
- The proposed merger is seen as not promoting the inclusive ethos that is suitable for children of all backgrounds.
- A number of comments stated that parents/carers may remove their children from the school because of the faith status.
- I believe we have a strong community as a non-faith school.
- Others felt that imposing religion on families and children that have intentionally chosen a non-faith school in the area is unjust.

GB Response to Theme 1 – Faith School / Non-Faith School Governors were mindful of the sensitivities around the issue and conscious of a sense from some respondents that the amalgamation feels like a takeover. A proactive approach to addressing these worries was judged to be imperative, as was a need to clarify misconceptions about what a Church school is like compared with non-Church schools. e.g. all schools, irrespective of whether they are church, community or maintained, should by law have a daily act of collective worship. It was seen as important for both communities to be able to recognise the diversity within both schools and that St Jude's is a school that champions an ethos of inclusivity. Governors were keen to stress that St Jude's as a school, is inclusive; the prayer and reflection room which is accessible to all children of all faiths or of no faith (children who want a quiet time away from class are allowed to use the room) that champions an ethos of inclusivity

Theme 2 – Effects on Children's Education

- There were over 25 comments on the effects the amalgamation may have on children's Education.
- A number of respondents felt that amalgamation would bring opportunities and challenges.
- Concerns were over overcrowding and disruption to children's learning, changes to the curriculum and whether there would be enough preparation time should the amalgamation go ahead.
- Parents/Carers wanted to know if the support their child receives now, whether SEN or not, would continue and pupils' needs would be met.
- Concerns were raised about SATS, going into Year 6 and whether preparation for Secondary School would be affected.

GB Response to Theme 2 – Effect on children's Education Governors were at pains to emphasise the education and welfare of the children were paramount and underlined that the needs of all students, irrespective of their individual needs would be met in a new entity. It was noted both schools have experienced staff and good educational outcomes. It would be hoped the new entity would be able to take the best practice from both schools. Time would no doubt be side aside to make sure the Year 6s from September 2024 were well supported and efforts would be made to ensure they were secondary ready by July 2025. The Charlotte Sharman site is large enough to accommodate all existing pupils at both schools and the larger pupil numbers would be expected to translate into wider opportunities – e.g. after school clubs, more targeted interventions etc.

Theme 3 – Effects on Wellbeing of children

- Over 25 comments were made concerning wellbeing.
- Respondents felt positive that the amalgamation allows for better social development.
- Concerns were voiced about coping with change, financial costs for a new uniform and pupils being disorientated.

- Lots of comments indicating that an amalgamation would cause a loss of unique identity, impact staff morale, there would be irreconcilable core values and lots of parents/carers wanted to keep the status quo.

GB Response to Theme 3 – Effects on Wellbeing of children Concerns over SEND pupils or those who might struggle with change would be at the forefront of leaders’ minds during any transition period should the amalgamation go ahead. Specific plans would be needed to be in place to ensure a smooth as possible process, particularly for St Jude’s students who would be leaving a familiar environment, albeit with familiar staff. Many of the concerns expressed (e.g. about uniforms) have been addressed by the FAQs on both schools’ websites, but it was acknowledged more work needed to be done to communicate the relevant information and for the FAQs to be a live document.

Theme 4 -Staffing

- Over 20 comments about staff and their future.
- Respondents were very complimentary about the staff in both schools, stating that they are wonderful, dedicated and outstanding.
- Some staff themselves felt that they had limited information about the proposed amalgamation and had received contradictory information.
- Some comments on the wellbeing of staff given the timeframe and lack of progress.
- A primary concern is the displacement of teachers and staff.

GB Response to Theme 4 – Staffing Governors wished to acknowledge staff who have been working with this uncertainty, but who have continued to provide quality education to the children in their care. Governors also emphasised how they wanted staff to feel supported during a time of change and challenge; they understood how concerned some individuals may be feeling about the prospect of change. It was felt renewed efforts to bring together the staff teams of the respective schools would bring profound benefits should the amalgamation proceed to the next stage. Governors were concerned that staff believe there has been inconsistent information given to them and urge action is taken to remedy this perception. Staff do not need to apply for jobs– as laid out in the FAQs – but as with any primary school, precise numbers of staff available for September 2024 will not necessarily become clear until the May 31st cut-off date for teacher resignations (although support staff resignations are not bound by the same constraints)

Theme 5 – Local Community

- Over 8 comments
- Respondents felt that other alternatives should have been explored to address falling rolls.
- A concern was raised about money being the priority above the needs of the community.
- Concerns about the name of the school, the uniform and whether the amalgamated school would reflect the community as well as what would happen to St Jude’s should the merger not go ahead.

GB Response to Theme 5 – Local Community The amalgamated school will be reflective of its community and will, as much as possible seek input in terms of its uniform, name, vision from the community as well as from its stakeholders. Should the amalgamation not progress, governors will consider other alternatives to combat the issue of falling rolls.

Theme 6 – Travel

- 3 comments made with one citing the location as the driving force for the proposed amalgamation, the other 2 saw close proximity as a good thing.

GB Response to Theme 6 – Travel The amalgamation would be the least disruptive as possible for children and adults in terms of logistics and offers many opportunities for the two school communities to begin to build relationships in a meaningful way

Theme 7 – Sustainability

- Over 10 comments referenced sustainability.
- The LA considered the rationale for a proposed amalgamation to be clear, with both schools heavily impacted by the falling number of pupils.
- The proposed amalgamation would be expected to create a more sustainable school provided it attracted more children than attending both schools at present.
- The whole point of amalgamating is to have more children, this current proposal will leave our school with significantly less (parent)
- If a significant proportion of current or potential future parents were to decide they did not wish their child to attend a Church of England Primary School, a more sustainable school might not be realised.

GB Response to Theme 7- Sustainability St Jude's is already an inclusive school that welcomes a diverse range of pupils and provides a critical service to the local community, and there is no reason why this ethos would not be carried over into the new school. Governors were of the opinion the drivers which prompted the move to amalgamate are not expected to change in the short term and that it is unlikely that either school is a viable proposition in the medium to longer term on current demographic projections. Governors wished to point out amalgamations between schools that have proved to be successful despite a large degree of initial opposition. Most recently the creation of Bird in Bush school that brought together Camelot and Cobourg and the 2011-2012 merger between St James and Alma Primary school. Evidence from the later - that saw a non-faith school join with a Church of England school - gives hope that an equal amalgamation between two solid schools could result in an even stronger single school. There are already early signs that the Bird in Bush school has been able to build on the strengths of the two constituent schools and that despite pushback from parents and staff, it is already judged to be succeeding.

Governors' Decision

- Following their Full Governors' Meeting, Charlotte Sharman requested a brief pause in the final decision-making process to allow further questions to be asked of the Local Authority.
- Due to the overwhelming majority of responses to the public consultation at stage 1 of the proposed amalgamation process, including the school's, the wider public and media responses to Faith Status, CSPS felt they needed to consult with the Director and his representatives at the LA.
- On receiving the information Governors felt that it did not help in solving the major problem created by falling rolls.

What is being proposed and why?

After careful consideration of the information received from the LA and the pre-Consultation feedback (18/12/23 – 7/2/24) the Governors of both schools in discussion with the Southwark Diocese Board of Education (SDBE), have made the decision to proceed to the Formal Consultation Stage of the proposal.

What does this involve?

This involves moving to Stage 2 by issuing a Statutory Notice, that informs all stakeholders for both schools and the wider community about the proposed amalgamation. There is a Formal Consultation (Stage 3 Representation Phase) that lasts 4 weeks which launches on 15/4/24 – 13/5/24. and is a further opportunity for stakeholders, the wider community, businesses, residents and anyone else to share their views, comments, concerns.

How to do this?

- The Statutory Notice is placed outside of the school building where it can be seen by parents/carers, staff and the public.
- It is placed in local libraries
- A brief notice containing a website address to obtain a copy of the Full Proposal and Consultation Form is placed in a local newspaper (Southwark News)

At the end of this document there are details of how you can get involved and have your views represented.

Why is this happening?

Background information

- In recent years both schools have found it difficult to fill the 30 places they are able to admit each year and therefore there is a surplus capacity in both schools.
- Both schools' Governing Bodies were approached by the Council in 2022 to consider an amalgamation as part of the Council's "Keeping Education Strong" strategy. A Working Party was set up to investigate the possibility of an amalgamation following the consideration of all other options. A Project Manager was also appointed. The schools, SDBE and Southwark Council representatives held a series of informal, information sessions during March 2023 with parents/carers of children at the

schools and staff to explain the situation at both schools and outline why amalgamation was being discussed

- It is a principle of the Council to protect Southwark’s high quality of education, however, this may be compromised where the cost of teaching staff, equipment and enrichment activities become unaffordable.
- Southwark has already taken steps to reduce surplus capacity, through :-
 Reducing schools Pupil admission numbers (PANs)
 Federating Schools
 Supporting schools to make alternative use of school space
 Closing schools
- Over the last 5 years St Jude's Primary School and Charlotte Sharman Primary School have experienced a reduced take up of Reception places. St Jude's, previously a 1FE VA primary school (PAN Nos 210) has 78 (2024) pupils and currently functions as a ½ FE school with only 4 combined classes. It had to take the decision to close its nursery due to lack of numbers for September 2023. CSPA similarly has 162 pupils currently with a PAN Nos of 262 resulting in significant surplus capacity, all of which impacts the schools’ finances as money is issued per pupil at the school.
- With both Schools’ rolls having reduced significantly, this impacts negatively on resources and costs. The two schools are not financially sustainable in the medium to long term and are highly likely to be in deficit in the near future.

Reasons for the decline in demand

Falling birth rate

The falling number of births is a national problem and in England and Wales the number of live births has dropped by 14% since 2012. However, in Southwark the problem is far more acute with a 30% fall in births. London and neighbouring boroughs have seen their numbers fall at a higher rate than the national average

As evidenced in the table below: -

Area	Births 2012	Births 2021	Difference	Percentage
Southwark	5,056	3,525	- 1,531	-30%
Lambeth	4,833	3,554	-1,279	-26%
Lewisham	4,940	4,024	-916	-19%
Inner London	53,965	43,120	-10,845	-20%
London	134,037	110,961	-23,076	-17%
England and Wales	730,883	625,008	-105,875	-14%

Demographic

The 2021 Census found that the number of children aged between 0-15 living in Southwark had reduced by around 2000 (-4%) since 2011. However, the number of children in the age group 0-4 had reduced by -21% over the same 10-year period, some 4,400 children in Southwark.

0-15

Area	0-15 2011	0-15 2021	Difference	Percentage
Southwark	50,398	48,500	-1,898	-4%
Lambeth	51,831	45,700	-6,131	-12%
Lewisham	53,937	54,900	963	+2%
Inner London	563,297	549,900	-13,397	-2%
London	1,531,169	1,595,900	64,731	+4
England and Wales	9,891,138	10,352,600	461,462	+5

0-4

Area	Percentage
Southwark	-21%
Lambeth	-26%
Lewisham	-13%
Inner London	-17%
London	-11%
England and Wales	-7%

EU Migration / Brexit

EU migration has fallen since 2016 having a significant impact on London, the area where EU immigrants made up the largest proportion of the population. Between the Brexit referendum in 2016 and the first emergence of Covid 19 in early 2020 migration from the EU fell sharply with a significant number of EU citizens returning to their countries of origin impacting greatly on school numbers in Southwark.

Housing Costs

Lack of affordable housing is a London wide problem and a real problem in Southwark, contributing to falling rolls. Prices in the private sector have risen rapidly in recent years making private housing increasingly un-affordable for families. Prices of properties in Southwark have risen by +32%. This is much higher than neighbouring boroughs as is the price of rental accommodation, which in Southwark is the highest in south east London.

Area	Median property price 2022	Average property price 2016	Difference
Lambeth	£550k	£475k	+£75k (+14%)
Southwark	£539k	£368k	+£171k (+32%)
London	£510k	£419	+£91k (+18%)
Lewisham	£450k	£368k	+£82k (+22%)
S E England	£355k	£279k	+£76k (+21%)
England	£270k	£210k	+£60k (+22%)

Changes to the benefits system/cost of living crisis

With the introduction of Universal Credit and then a freeze of it in 2016 and the Bedroom Tax being introduced in 2016, the net effect is to force residents out of Southwark to find more affordable accommodation, either in neighbouring boroughs or out of London all together, contributing to the fall in pupil numbers.

As a result of the above, all schools are struggling to fill their places because they are having to pay the same costs to run schools, with fewer children attending, with reduced funding.

Benefits from Amalgamation

- No children will be displaced if the amalgamation goes ahead. Every child will have a place.
- Both schools follow the same curriculum
- The differing needs of each age group and every child will continue to be met at the amalgamated school
- The proposal is in the best long-term interest for the children and their families,
- It will increase cash resources and reduce competition as both schools are currently competing for the children in the local area
- Better use of education resources including teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Amalgamation provides a single school at the heart of the local community offering a consistent vision and ethos bringing about benefits for children, staff, parents and carers.
- More pupils = more money and that means increased resources to be spent on the education and wellbeing of the children.

- A larger primary school, offers a nurturing environment. Children work and play together developing a greater understanding and appreciation of one another's diverse strengths, skills and personalities, better enabling them to become rounded citizens
- There is also a positive impact on social skills, problem solving and relationship development.
- For staff there is an increased opportunity to develop professional interests and skills
- A bigger school assists in recruitment and retention of staff providing greater professional opportunities
- Both schools are graded 'Good' by Ofsted and well placed to drive up standards and the quality of Education together to become "Outstanding"
- A bigger more financially viable school helps avoid closure.

Travel

Due to the close proximity of the two schools travelling is not an issue

Statutory Requirements

In line with the Departments for Education's (DFE) guidance: *opening and closing maintained schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers, January 2023* and the Education and **Inspections** Act (EIA) 2006 as amended by the Education Act 2011 the Governors will be following the statutory process for amalgamating schools that consist of 5 stages

Stage one: Consultation – It is a statutory requirement for Governors / SDBE to consult any parties they think appropriate before any move to Formal Proceedings. The consultation lasts for 6 weeks to allow the widest possible canvassing of views. The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of and engage with those that will be directly affected by the proposed amalgamation of St Jude's and CSPA. **18/12/23 – 7/2/24 – Completed.**

Stage Two: Publication – After the consultation outlined above, the Governors / SDBE analyse the results and decide whether to proceed with the publication of formal proposals (known as statutory proposals) to amalgamate. If they do decide to proceed, Statutory Notices alerting stakeholders to the proposals will be published in the Southwark News, on the school's website and will be displayed at the entrances to the school. The proposals will invite further comment on the proposed amalgamation and such comments would be made during the next phase, "Representation Phase". **15/4/24 – 13-5/24 – (Happening now)**

Stage three: Representation – If it is decided to proceed with the publication of statutory proposals, the "Representation phase" begins on the date of publication of the statutory proposals (15/4/2024) and will last four weeks. Any person would be able to send concerns or comments on the proposal to the email account identified. – **(Happening now)**

Stage four: Decision – within 2 months of the end of the Representation Phase, the Council’s Cabinet will meet to discuss and make a decision on whether on not to amalgamate the schools. The **decision** on whether or not to amalgamate the schools **must** be made by the Council’s Cabinet alone.

Stage five: Implementation – If the Council’s Cabinet decides to amalgamate the schools, this would take effect from the **31st August 2024**

What happens next?

- The full proposal is published on both school’s websites with details of how people can participate in the Formal Consultation. (if translations are needed, please contact the school)
- Paper copies of the proposal can be obtained at the office in both schools
- All comments / concerns can be registered on the proforma accessed below.
- The Representation Phase ends on **13/5/24** at midnight.
- There is a notice to be placed in the Southwark News.

15/4/2024

- Formal Consultation begins
- A copy of the Full Proposal Statutory Notice and any other information is sent to:
 - Secretary of State
 - SDBE
 - Any other religious authority in the area
 - The Local Authority
 - Other neighbouring authorities
 - Trade Unions
 - MPs

Procedure for making representations (Objections and comments)

By email to:- stagetwoconsultationjtomkins@outlook.com

By post or by hand to the school office in a sealed envelope

By scanning the QR code below to access the proforma

