Establishing a Strategic Partnership

March 2019
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Each Strategic Partnership will usually take the name of both schools. There will be an agreement that the Strategic Partnership will be in place for 2 – 5 years. Schools involved in a Strategic Partnership will be bound by a Memorandum of Understanding during this time.

During the Strategic Partnership, schools will usually be led by an Executive Head Teacher. Initially both governing bodies will be independent, however over time (2 – 5 years) committees may amalgamate due to efficiency of time and expertise.

It is essential at the outset for leaders and governors to have a clear understanding of why they are entering into a Strategic partnership and what they want the Strategic Partnership to achieve. As far as possible there should be specific outcomes against which to measure the effectiveness of the partnership.

The following steps are highly recommended and are a result of good practice already shared across the borough of Islington and practice nationally.

**Step 1:**

- Any initiative of strategic partnership should come from the headteacher and/or governors; or when a school and the LA/diocese have identified, through the annual categorisation of the school (WiSS), that there is a need to establish a strategic partnership
- Explore the idea of a strategic partnership with existing models within and outside of the borough in conjunction with School Improvement Service who would act as a broker for the potential partnership
- Following the step above, leaders and governors should identify potential partners (maximum of 3) – this should be based on what they want the partnership to achieve.
- The LA will arrange and broker potential partners an opportunity to discuss the reasons for seeking a partnership, the potential vision and expected outcomes

**Step 2:**

- Establish a Strategic Board of core governors from both schools and a representative from the LA
- Task the Board to complete the following:
  - Undertake a process of due diligence of each school
  - Present a leadership structure and shadow structure
  - Seek appropriate support from the LA – HR, Finances, School Improvement
  - Detailed examination of school finances
  - Communicate to staff of both schools regarding the consideration to enter a strategic partnership
- Present to both governing bodies a report on the proposal to enter a strategic partnership with another school
• Once a partner has been identified and agreed, prepare timelines and commitments which will take both schools to implementation

Step 3:

• Staff at both schools to be informed, outlining reason for a strategic partnership and information about what will change and what will not change
• School communities to be informed. This will be led by the Executive Head Teacher and representatives from the governing bodies
• Memorandum of understanding to be signed
• Strategic Board meetings to be scheduled within the governance structure of meetings throughout the year. It is recommended that the Strategic Board meet at least 3 - 4 times a year
• Strategic partnership – its vision, expected outcomes and memorandum of understanding, the structure of the Strategic Board be shared on the school website

Step 4:

• Strategic Partnership will commence
• Strategic Board to report to the full governing body on the effectiveness of the partnership linked to the vision and expected outcomes
• Provide regular communication to the school community and staff on the development of the partnership and its achievements linked to the vision and expected outcomes

Step 5:

• At the midpoint of the strategic partnership undertake a detailed review. This will include the following:
  o HR
  o Finance
  o Leadership, including teaching and learning, impact of the partnership across the communities
• Undertake a consideration of whether to pursue the partnership until the end of the memorandum agreement or commence a consultation on Federation of both schools