

Response to email to Sean Cox regarding headteacher at Camden Juniors

From: Unmonitored.ACCOUNT@education.gsi.gov.uk

Subject: Department for Education response: Case Reference 2013/0053504

Date: Tue, 3 Sep 2013 15:13:45 +0100

Dear xxx

Thank you for your email of 27 August, addressed to my colleague, Mr Cox, about the appointment of a head teacher at Camden Junior School by the Harris Federation. On this occasion I have been asked to respond.

It may help if I explain that the current head teacher at Camden Junior School decided to revert to her previous role as head of Victor Seymour School from 1 September 2013. With Camden in Ofsted special measures it was widely agreed that it was important that an experienced head teacher should be in place for September. The Harris Federation, as the department's proposed sponsor, undertook a head teacher (academy principal) recruitment process in May 2013 to ensure that there would be a principal ready to take up post when the academy opened. In advertising the post they made it clear this was subject to ministerial confirmation of them as sponsors. Before carrying out the interviews they also spoke to Sutton local authority and the Camden governing body about their plans. A member of the Camden governing body attended the principal interviews, these took place at the end of May. One of the candidates interviewed was successful and accepted the offer of the principal post.

As you may be aware head teachers are normally required to hand in their notice from their current posts around a term before they take up a new post. Given the timing of the Camden appointment it was therefore necessary for the Harris Federation to move quickly when the selected candidate withdrew his application. I have been advised by the Federation that this arose when it became clear after the interview that Greenshaw School would not uphold the appointment if they became sponsor. At that point the ministerial decision on Camden had not been made, and this led to the preferred candidate withdrawing his application. I understand the Harris Federation have made this information available to parents.

As a major academy sponsor with a strong reputation, and having worked with an extensive range of head teachers in the South London area, Harris were able to rapidly secure an experienced head teacher to commence work at Camden from September. This means that Camden will have an experienced principal in post, who has previously moved a school from Ofsted satisfactory to good, to ensure Camden gets off to a strong start. The new principal will be supported by Sir Robin Boshier, who has over twenty years' experience as a primary head teacher, including as head teacher of an Ofsted Outstanding School. Alongside him will be a number of advanced skills primary teachers (Harris currently have eight) from the central Harris team, who will be working with the Camden teaching staff when the academy opens.

Given the departure of the existing head teacher, the appointment of an experienced principal to lead Camden as an academy is something I am sure we would all welcome. Although the long term position of principal will need to be re-advertised the Harris Federation have a very good track record in this field and are confident

that they will be able to recruit a strong principal to the post now that a ministerial decision has been taken and there is no longer any uncertainty on the sponsor position. The fact that Harris were able to respond quickly and effectively to changing circumstances, (and the late withdrawal of a head teacher is something that could happen to any school) is reassuring.

Whilst it is clear that the head teacher role is important, it is not the only issue ministers have to take into account when considering an academy proposal. As the decision letter made clear they also took account of the educational proposals put forward by Harris and Greenshaw for Camden School, their ability to deploy resources quickly to deliver the urgently required transformational change, their access to primary school expertise and their respective track records.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Your correspondence has been allocated reference number 2013/0053504. If you need to respond to us, please visit: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, and quote your reference number.

As part of our commitment to improving the service we provide to our customers, we are interested in hearing your views and would welcome your comments via our website at: www.education.gov.uk/pcusurvey.

Yours sincerely

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