



Dear Stakeholders,

Between 8th May 2019 and 25th June 2019, Orchard Hill College Academy Trust conducted a Public Consultation process, under Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010, to establish a new special school in Hillingdon. The proposal was to close the current school The Skills Hub (at Providence Road, Yiewsley, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 8HJ) in order to build a new free school to provide better facilities and to accommodate students from the age of 5 to 19.

Following a majority of survey respondents (67%) stating that they were in favour of the proposed new school, permission was granted by the Department for Education (DfE) to proceed and is now subject to entering into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education before opening. The new school, which will retain the name of The Skills Hub (TSH), is currently being built on the same site as The PRIDE Academy, another school in the Trust. Completion is expected by end of November 2022. The new school is scheduled to open in January 2023.

We are now undertaking a 'listening period' with our key stakeholders, as part of the closure process of the current TSH, to offer information as to why the school is closing (see enclosed) and for stakeholders and interested parties to submit their views on how the school closure process can be best managed.



The listening period will run from Monday 10th October to Friday 11th November.

Information can be found on The Skills Hub website

<https://theskillshub.org/free-school/>

You may submit any comments to us via the following email address:

Reception@yphub.org

Or by writing to

Office Manager, The Skills Hub, Providence Road, Yiewsley, UB7 8HJ.

Kind regards

Paul Chambers, Principal, The Skills Hub.

Background

Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT) currently operates The Skills Hub (TSH) - URN: 142107, DfE number: 312/1100. TSH is a co-educational Alternative Provision that caters for students aged 11-16 in the London Borough of Hillingdon who cannot attend mainstream school for a variety of reasons, predominantly permanent exclusion.

In December 2015 OHCAT submitted a Free School bid with the intention of closing this facility to create a new Free School that extends provision in the area from age 5 to 19 and to increase the capacity from 50 to 120.

The Orchard Hill Special Free School (Hillingdon) bid, as it was called then, was approved by the DfE in September 2016.

A Section 10 Public Consultation took place between Wednesday 8th May 2019 to Tuesday 25th June 2019, which was in support (67%) of the proposed closure and the opening of a new free school, with the same designation.

The new school, which will retain the name of The Skills Hub (TSH), is currently being built on the same site as The PRIDE Academy, another school in the Trust. Completion is expected in Autumn 2022.

Proposal

2.1 Local authority need

The Regional Schools Commissioner and the DfE Free School Team are fully aware of the proposed new free school, and thus the closure of the current TSH. The local authority, the London Borough of Hillingdon, are also aware and are supportive of the new school having issued a formal commissioning letter to OHCAT to place children at the new TSH from January 2023 onwards.

2.2 Impact of closure on existing students, staff and the local community

The new TSH will have a capacity of 120. All the students from the old TSH will transition to the new school and no one will have their education interrupted or be displaced. All staff will also transition to the new school. There are no TUPE implications as the staff will remain employees of OHCAT. The Local Authority (LA) is supportive of the planned new capacity as it will provide flexibility to accommodate changes in the future.

The new school is being built on the site of The PRIDE Academy, 71 Falling Lane, Yiewsley, West Drayton UB7 8AB. There will be little change to the travelling times for the students and no change to the costs associated with the LA's transport arrangements.

The intention is to close the current TSH at the end of the Autumn term in 2022, i.e. December 2022. We will then decant to the new build and the new TSH will open in January 2023.

An Academy Equality Impact Assessment of the proposed closure has considered the expected impact of the proposed change on all individuals with protected characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010. Analysis showed that the proposal will have a neutral impact and no groups will be adversely affected by the project. Further information can be provided on request.

Note: The academy is not designated as having a religious character.

2.3 Current TSH's performance

The current TSH is graded GOOD (Last inspection: June 2018). Pupils achieve a range of GCSE and other accreditations meaning NEET figures are always below local and national average; with many pupils accessing local colleges.





3. Next Steps

This 'listening period' will be an opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to be provided with information as to why the school is closing and how it is proposed the closure process will operate.

Likewise, it is an opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to submit their views on how the school closure process can be best managed.

Once the plan is completed, and a substantive closure decision has been made by the Secretary of State, OHCAT will liaise with the DfE and the Education and Skills Funding Agency to:

- agree the new place funding for the new TSH;
- terminate the current academy's Supplemental Funding Agreement (SFA) through a Deed of Termination; and
- establish a new SFA for the new TSH.

Please note that as a result of the closure of the current TSH, there will be:

- No staff redundancies;
- No displacement of pupils;
- No change to pension liabilities as the staff will remain employees of OHCAT; and
- No change in the academy's reserves position, as it will be transferred to the new TSH.