

HARD FEDERATION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Why have the schools proposed that a Hard Federation is the way forward/ What are the advantages?

We believe that this is the best way forward to build on the very successful collaboration that both schools have experienced since entering into a 'Soft Federation' in 2011. Foundations that have already been laid over the last 6 years have benefitted both staff and children. There has been a very successful collaboration between both schools and strong relationships having been developed. A Hard Federation will give both schools opportunities that they wouldn't have if they returned to separate infant and Junior schools:

- Strong Leadership structure
- Coming together for Faith and other cultural and social events
- Sharing of good practice and expertise
- Sharing of staff skills with greater flexibility for supporting learning
- Greater learning opportunities for the whole community (pupils, staff, parents)
- Stronger purchasing powers and potential economies of scale savings

For our children this would mean:

- A consistent approach to teaching and learning as the children move from one school to another
- Greater opportunities for the moderation of pupils' assessment work
- Improved transition between the Infant and Junior schools
- Seamless monitoring of pupil progress from the ages of 3 to 11
- Increased capacity to meet the needs of children through the sharing of knowledge and resources
- Greater opportunity for an enriched curriculum including clubs and other community activities

2. Why can't we keep what we currently have?

The Soft Federation was a temporary arrangement to see if both schools could benefit from working more closely together. This arrangement has been in place since 2011 and came up for review in December 2016.

3. Would this simply be a step to becoming an Academy?

There are no expectations that a hard Federation leads to Academy status. Governors would have to consider this as a separate exercise and not one we are currently considering.

4. Would we be able to leave the Federation if we needed to?

There is no limit of time for a Hard Federation and can be dissolved with the agreement of the FGB. However, the governing boards would not enter into a Hard Federation believing it to be a temporary measure. The governing boards must consider what is in the best interests for the children.

5. Who needs to be consulted on whether we enter into a Hard Federation?

Both Governing Boards have voted to proceed to become a Hard Federation, and there now follows a period of consultation which must be at least 6 weeks. The Governing Boards have published proposals for the federation which are shared with the local authority, the staff of both schools, the trustees (the Diocese), all governors, all parents, and any other persons the Governing boards may consider appropriate. The Governing Boards must jointly consider all responses. Following consideration of the responses, both Governing Boards must decide whether to proceed or not to proceed. Full details of this process are available in The School Governance (Federations) Regulations 2012.

6. Will we have to change the name of our schools?

No, this is not an amalgamation. Both schools will continue to keep their own names.

7. What is the timeline for becoming a Hard Federation?

The consultation document would be available for all parents, staff, governors and members of the community to comment on in April 2017.

This process will take about 6 weeks to complete.

8. What will happen to the individual Governing Boards?

On the federation date, the Governing Boards will dissolve and a new Governing Board will be formed. It is a requirement that the make - up of this Governing Board is based on the Diocesan models and that a 'governor skills audit' informs the process. Hard federations have **one** Governing Board and they will elect a new Chairperson.

9. What is the timeline for becoming a Hard Federation?

The consultation document is available for all parents, staff, governors and members of the community to comment on by 13th June 2017. Following that the Governing boards are proposing that the Hard Federation would come into effect from 1st September 2017 if this is approved following the consultation process. This timetable allows time for a response to the consultation and also takes into account the requirements of the local authority.

Governing Board

10. What will happen to the individual Governing Boards?

On the federation date, the governing boards of each school will dissolve and a new governing board will be formed. It is a requirement that the make-up of this governing board is based on the Diocesan models and that a 'governor skills audit' informs the process. Hard Federations have one Governing Board covering the schools that are in that Federation.

11. Who will be the Chair of the Hard Federation?

The governing board of the new federation elects a Chair. We will be guided by the timeline as to when we have to do this.

12. Will it mean more work for Governors?

The new governing board must be equally concerned for both schools and so therefore, previous 'school' alliance representation is not essential. The governors' skills audit should be a good determinant in allocation of duties. It might be that the new governing board would consider additional co-opted associate members serving on committees should certain ad hoc skills be required.

13. How will the governing committees be organised?

There will be one committee covering both schools in a federation. In preparation for the federation both schools have an agreed framework for Governing Board Committees. The governing board will need to consider where it holds its meetings once a federation has been created.

14. Will I be expected to undertake Governing Board duties in the other schools?

For the new governing board, governors will be asked to put aside their existing school allegiances and serve both schools.

15. Will there be one OFSTED inspection in the future?

No. Both schools will continue to have their own OFSTED inspections.

Human Resources

16. What will this mean for me as a member of staff?

Members of staff in both schools will receive a variation of contract as they will have a new employer. They will continue on their current terms and conditions of employment and continuity for contractual purposes will remain unchanged. One of the benefits of a Hard Federation between the two schools will be to continue the successful cross-working arrangements that have made the collaboration so successful.

HR would be happy to offer both group and individual (1-1) advice to any member of staff should they wish to discuss any implications of a possible federation.

17. What will happen to my pay pension?

There will be no detriment to staff pay or pension and the existing performance and pay policies and procedures will continue to apply.

18. Will roles be protected for the existing staff?

All staff would TUPE across on their existing terms and conditions with a variation to their contracts stating that they are employed by the Federation. Staffing structures and roles will continue to be reviewed as they are under the current arrangements, so the creation of a Hard Federation does not offer any additional "protection".

19. How would the two schools recruit?

The schools would advertise as normal. Past experience shows that it is potentially easier to recruit for a larger school than a smaller school due to the larger challenge and consequently a bigger pool of potential applicants would be interested.

20. Would a federation keep the turnover of teachers/staff low?

If staff are happy there is no reason why the turnover figure should increase. The Federation might also lead to more opportunities for teachers and staff. There might be more teaching experiences for all staff in a bigger school. Federations work well for NQTs in the system, where they can access more support and are consequently more likely to stay.

21. Will staff have to work in the other school if they were appointed before the Federation is agreed?

Staff who change their location will do so voluntarily.

22. Who will employ the new members of staff?

New members of staff will be employed by the Governing Board of the new Federation as opposed to the two separate Governing Boards. S/he will be allocated to a particular workplace as their predominant workplace, but a clause in the workplace will say that they can be asked to work across both or either sites and depending on requirements will be deployed accordingly.

23. Will any posts reduce as a result of the Federation?

This is not a driver for moving into a Federation. The existing staff structures will continue to be reviewed (as they are now) dependent on need.

Finance

24. Will the schools still have their own budgets?

Yes. Governors and staff are required to ensure best value of money and the strategic application of funding, so in practice federated schools would consider resource decision based on overall fairness and the best outcomes for the children. There is authority for the Hard

Federation to vire money from one school to another for the educational purposes of all children but the budgets of each school have to be accounted for separately.

25. Will the basis on which the schools are currently funded alter in any way?

Becoming a federation will not alter the basis on which the schools are funded (there is no "surcharge" for being in a federation). However we are aware that there continue to be changes to funding for all schools on a regular basis.

26. How will existing posts be affected?

The Federation Committee will consult with HR on the implications of a Hard Federation for existing posts, including TLR allowances. Consideration will be given to differences in current pay scales for staff with the same job descriptions across both schools. This will happen directly after both governing boards have considered this report and voted on the proposal.

Communications

27. Are there any staff meetings planned?

Weekly Deputy Headteacher and Headteacher meetings have been scheduled on Thursday mornings starting from September. Weekly staff meetings are planned where appropriate ensuring CPD is continuous across both schools. Joint SLT meetings will be planned into the Autumn Term 2017.

Planned and specific training and development will be targeted for teaching assistants to work together across both schools.

During the formal consultation process there will be requirements to talk formally to staff and their Trade Union representatives.

28. How are you going to communicate with the parents?

A letter outlining the proposal and its rationale will be sent to parents. There will be discussions with parents at both schools during the formal consultation process. Drop in Sessions will be held to give parents an opportunity to ask questions about the implications of a Hard Federation. Feedback from this consultation will be brought back to the Federation Committee.

29. How will key stakeholder views be collected and considered?

Alongside the parents, the staff and the parish, the governors will need to consider what other views need to be taken into account. The Diocese and local authority will continue to support the governors during the process.

