

Consett Infant School and Nursery Unit and Beechdale Nursery School Consultation Document on a Proposal for a Hard Federation

Background

In February 2014 Mrs Graham, Head Teacher at Beechdale Nursery School ('**Beechdale**') began working with Consett Infant and Nursery School ('**Consett Infants**') in the capacity of Acting Head Teacher due to that position becoming vacant following the resignation of Mrs Wallace. This request was granted by the Governing Body of Beechdale, and approved by Consett Infants' Governing Body, with Consett Infants paying for 2.5 days per week of Mrs Graham's time.

During the last 12 months whilst Mrs Graham has been in this post, Governors of both schools have seen first hand the benefits of close collaboration between the two schools. The Governors of Consett Infants have met to discuss the future leadership of the school. Following the success of the current arrangement at Consett Infants, and the additional benefits which this could bring to both schools in the future, Consett Infants' Governing Body has approached Beechdale's Governing Body to request a formal partnership, in the form of a "Hard Federation" ("**Federation**") between the two schools. This would formalise existing arrangements, and enable the schools to extend their collaboration further.

To this end the Governing Bodies of Consett Infants and Beechdale wish, through this document, to inform you of their proposal to establish a Federation between the two schools. Both Governing bodies have agreed to consult on the establishment of a Federation from 1st June to the 10th July 2015, with a view to Federating from 1st January 2016. A consultation exercise is now being held with parents, staff and other stakeholders so that Governors can receive feedback on the proposal.

Key Points about a Potential Federation

- The schools would remain individual schools.
- The names of the schools would not change, but there would be a name for the federation.
- There would be no changes to admission arrangements.
- There would be no changes of employment for existing staff.
- There would be one governing body and one Executive Head Teacher with strategic responsibility for both schools.
- The Deputy/Assistant Head Teacher in each school would manage the school on a day to day basis in the absence of the Executive Head Teacher.

Potential Benefits of a Federation

Pupils

- Improved transition from Beechdale to Consett Infants with the possibility of closer staff links and some movement of staff between the two establishments.
- Closer collaboration between the schools in terms of curriculum to ensure that the Early Years Curriculum prepares pupils for Key Stage 1 education.
- Sharing of staff knowledge, expertise, and ideas between both schools with increased opportunities for staff from Consett Infants to engage with pupils at Beechdale prior to transition.
- Increased opportunities for shared projects and activities between the two schools.

Parents

- Reduced anxiety about their children moving from Beechdale to Consett Infant as they would already know the Executive Head Teacher and potentially other staff from Consett Infants.
- A more seamless transition from one school to the other, with the knowledge that staff from both schools would be involved in sharing information, teaching and behavioural strategies more fully.

N.B Having a place at Beechdale does not guarantee a child a place at Consett Infants – see Admissions paragraph for further details

Staff

- Opportunities for shared professional development between the two schools.
- Opportunities to share good practice between the two schools.
- Opportunities, for current staff who wish to, and for all staff appointed post federation to work across schools, increasing their knowledge and expertise of different phases, or aspects of the schools' work.

Governors

- The extended remit as Governors of both schools would give increased challenge and variety and would utilise the already strong skills of both Governing Bodies to provide the best possible leadership for both schools.

In addition a federation would provide opportunities for:

- A structured way for both schools to collaborate.
- Cost effective and coherent budget management in terms of procurement across both sites to ensure best value.

Two schools working closely together can offer their children opportunities beyond that which a single institution can provide.

Governance

In establishing a federation one of the most visible immediate changes is to governance.

In a federation the current Governing Body for each school would be dissolved upon federating and they will form a new single Governing body for the federated schools. This is a prescribed process and must be followed in all cases of federation.

Staffing

Becoming a federation does not change the designation of either school. The Local Authority will continue to be the employer of all staff engaged at the two schools through the Governing Body. The movement to federation does not change this arrangement.

Every year governors review the staffing complement of each school to ensure the experience and expertise required is available to service the needs of pupils and the curriculum. This will continue to be the case in each school within the federated arrangement.

No staff member who currently works in either school can be required to work across both schools, though they may choose to do so. However, other shared staffing arrangements may be considered in the future.

Admissions

The Local Authority will continue to be the legal admissions authority for pupils to Consett Infants. As such, parents will express their preference for a Reception class place via the Local Authority's admissions procedure just as they always have. Parents seeking a nursery place will continue to apply directly to Beechdale.

Additional Information

The two schools will remain individual schools. Pupils will belong to a single school within the federation; the schools belong to the federation. The names of the individual schools will not be changed in any way. However, a name for the overall federation will be decided at a later date.

Consultation

Governors wish to consult widely with stakeholder groups associated with both schools. Your thoughts and opinions about the future of our schools are valued and Governors welcome comments about this exciting development. Written comments will be considered at a joint meeting of the Governing Bodies following the conclusion of the consultation period and in advance of a final decision being made by the individual governing bodies of Consett Infants and Beechdale.

Accompanying this paper is a Frequently Asked Questions document which governors hope you will find helpful.

The consultation period begins on Monday 1st June 2015 to Friday 10th July 2015.

If you wish to comment please complete the attached form and return it to one of the addresses below, or write to the Chair of Governing Body in either school.

Mrs Judith Davison (Chair of Governing Body)
Mrs Julia Graham (Head Teacher)
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Teasdale Street
Consett
County Durham
DH8 6AF
Tel: 01207 504464
[email: consettinfant@durhamlearning.net](mailto:consettinfant@durhamlearning.net)

Cllr Alex Watson (Chair of Governing Body)
Mrs Julia Graham (Head Teacher)
Beechdale Nursery School
Beechdale Road
Consett
County Durham
DH8 6AY
Tel: 01207 505752
[email: beechdale@durhamlearning.net](mailto:beechdale@durhamlearning.net)

Federations of Schools

Frequently asked Questions

1. Will the names of the schools change?

No. There is no requirement or intention to change the name of either school. However there will be a name for the federation

2. Do the pupils belong to the federation or to a single school?

The pupils belong to a single school within the federation. The schools belong to the federation.

3. Will there be any change to admissions arrangements?

No. The Local Authority will continue to be the legal admissions authority for pupils to Consett Infants. As such, parents will express their preference for a Reception class place via the Local Authority's admissions procedure just as they always have. Parents seeking a nursery place will continue to apply directly to Beechdale.

4. Will pupils from both schools have opportunities to work together?

Yes. There are already times when pupils meet together. These opportunities will increase, where it is felt beneficial and appropriate for those involved.

5. Do schools in a federation have to have the same training days?

No. Such decisions will be within the schools discretion. It may be helpful for some training days to coincide so that staff training could be shared, but there is no compulsion.

6. Who employs the staff of a federation?

Members of staff continue to be employed by the Local Authority via the governors of the federation. Therefore, there is no need for TUPE transfer (Transfer of undertakings – protection of employment). This means that there will be no changes to the employment of existing staff.

7. Will there be any changes in conditions of service for staff?

No changes. All employment rights, pension arrangements etc. remain exactly as they are.

8. Can staff teach or work across the schools in a federation?

Existing members of staff cannot be directed to teach or otherwise work in a school they were not originally contracted to be employed in, although there may be opportunities to if staff wish to do this. Future vacancies can be advertised as working across more than one school, so any new employees will know their contractual position and job roles when they accept the post.

9. Can schools in a federation share continuing professional development arrangements?

Yes, this is one of the distinct advantages of belonging to a federation.

10. Do the school day or term or lesson times of schools in a federation have to be the same?

No, this is not essential.

11. Who will be “in charge” when the Executive Head Teacher is not in school

The Deputy/Assistant Head Teacher in each school will make day to day decisions in the absence of the Executive Head Teacher

12. Do schools in a federation have a single governing body?

Yes, in a federation the previous Governing Body for each school would be dissolved upon federating and a new single Governing Body would be established for the federated schools.

Governors will fully represent both schools.

It is for the governing body of the federation to determine how they will operate, within the requirement to have at least one meeting each term.

13. How will the governing body be made up?

It is intended that all current governors of both schools would become governors of the federation. The structure will be reviewed in the future.

14. Do federated schools have a combined budget allocation?

No, each school separately receives its usual budget share as determined by the Local Authority formula funding.

15. Can governors combine funding from each school?

Yes, but only to an extent. Governing bodies of federations often have a relatively small proportion of funds ‘pooled’ for the benefit of all schools in the federation. The salary costs of the Executive Head Teacher and any other shared staff would be paid equally by both schools.

16. Will a federation be inspected by Ofsted?

Individual schools within a federation will be inspected in the usual way by Ofsted. Ofsted sometimes inspect federated schools at the same time, but both schools are inspected separately, and have their own judgements and their own report.

17. Can a school leave a federation?

There is a mechanism for schools to leave but the decision to federate should be seen by governors from the outset as a long term commitment.

18. Will there be any impact upon partner schools?

None. Any successful partnership working will continue with special, primary and secondary schools as at present.

19. How will everyone be informed of progress?

Following the consultation process, ongoing information will be provided to stakeholders by letter and the school's website.

20. Will Consett Infants and Beechdale become one school and move into a new build together?

No, they will stay separate schools.

Hopefully we have anticipated some of the questions you may have, but if not please let us know of any further questions or queries. We aim to keep everyone up to date with developments.

Please ask if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Proposal to form a Hard Federation

RESPONSE FORM

Governors from both schools are very keen to receive feedback to the consultation from parents/carers, staff, and other key partners/stakeholders working with each school.

Please use this form to give us your thoughts and views regarding the proposal to federate the two schools, returning it by midday on Friday 10th July 2015.

It would be helpful if you were able to give any reasons and/or evidence to support your views.

Many thanks.

Are you in favour of a hard federation between Consett Infant School and Nursery Unit and Beechdale Nursery School (Please Circle)

Yes

No

Comments

Please circle as appropriate

I am a....

Parent/Carer

Staff Member

Other.....

From....

Consett Infant School and Nursery Unit

Beechdale Nursery School