

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED FEDERATION

Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Thundridge Church of England Primary School

24th September 2021

Dear Parent, Carer and/or Member of Staff,

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED FEDERATION OF TONWELL ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL & THUNDRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Governing Boards of the two schools have recently informed you of their proposal to form a Federation between the two Schools. The schools have previously worked together and the formalisation of this through a federation is, we believe, in the interests of the children, staff and community for both schools.

The Governing Boards at each school are today beginning a consultation process with parents, staff and other stakeholders (such as Hertfordshire County Council) on the formation of a federation between the schools – a federation that would be led by a single Governing Board.

The **Consultation Paper** that accompanies this letter sets out to address three items:

- A. The nature of the consultation process and the ways in which you can contribute to it.
- B. Governance arrangements under the Federation.
- C. Recommendation of the two Boards and the rationale.

The consultation process begins on 24th September 2021 and closes on 14th November 2021 at midnight.

There are a number of ways in which you can find out more and there will be opportunities for you to learn more about the Governing Board's proposal in face to face sessions at the two schools.

We look forward to your engagement in this consultation, which is important to the future development of our two schools.

If you have difficulty with the language in this consultation letter, please let us know and we will provide additional help.

It is also our intention to recruit an Executive Headteacher to lead both schools. You will be kept informed of this process also.

Yours sincerely,

Pat Furness
Chair of Governors
Thundridge School

Diana Howarth
Chair of Governors
Tonwell St Mary's School

A. The nature of the Consultation Process and ways in which you can contribute.

Summary

- As part of any move to a federation, the Governing Boards of each of our Schools are required to seek your views on any recommendation or proposal.

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- The Governing Boards are also required to consult with other stakeholders, including the Local Authority – Hertfordshire County Council and the Diocesan Board of Education.
- After these consultations, the two Governing Boards are required to come to a decision. They are not bound by the responses of any one group – for instance, parents or staff – but they are required to demonstrate that they have considered these views. For this reason, it is important that you respond.
- If either or both of the Governing Boards feel that there is insufficient support for the formation of a federation, other alternatives will be sought.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. When does the Consultation Process begin and when does it finish?

This consultation process opens 24th **September 2021** and closes on 14th **November 2021**.

2. How can I respond?

Parents and Carers:

There are four ways on which you can make your views known:

- By raising your comments or queries at scheduled face to face meetings (see below)
- By emailing your comments or queries to Kathy Dunnett, Chair of the Collaboration/Federation Committee - kathy.dunnett@tonwell.herts.sch.uk
- By posting your comments/queries to the Headteacher of either school (clearly marked - Federation Queries).
- By sending your pupil in with comments/queries in a sealed letter addressed to the Headteacher (clearly marked - Federation Queries).
- Using the response form if you prefer.

Two parents meetings have been scheduled to enable parents and carers to meet with the school and governing board representatives to discuss the federation proposal. The dates and venues are detailed below;

Thundridge – 27th September – 6.30 p.m.

Tonwell – 28th September at 8.50 am

Staff

Staff will be consulted via regular staff meetings at their respective schools. In addition, meetings specifically dedicated to this proposal are scheduled for the staff of both schools. The dates and venues are detailed below;

Thundridge – 27th September – 3.30 p.m.

Tonwell – 27th September at 3.30 p.m.

Staff are welcome to consult their trade unions and professional associations should they have concerns and queries. Staff can also invite them to the meetings above and we will ask that staff please inform the Headteacher of their school if their representative will be attending.

Children

- The federation process will feature in school assemblies and other aspects of school life during the consultation period.
- If any child wishes to express a concern they can do this via their parent or carer.

3. How will a decision be reached?

The two Governing boards are responsible for making the final decision, However, governors are required to take account of the responses to this consultation process, and we shall do so, via the following;

- Once this consultation process is complete, a report setting out the consultation findings will be presented to a joint meeting of the Governing boards of our two schools.
- Each Governing board will then meet on its own to decide whether or not it supports the formation of a federation.
- Both Governing boards have to independently agree to the formation of a federation for it to be created.
- As well as consulting with parents and staff, we are required to consult with the local authority (HCC) and to gain the approval of the Secretary of State for Education and the formal consent of the Diocesan board of Education.

4. Communication of Outcome

- Once a decision has been reached, all stakeholders will be informed.

Further Information

If you have questions about the proposed federation that we have not addressed here or the process outlined in this document, please contact the Governing boards via kathy.dunnett@tonwell.herts.sch.uk

B. Governance Arrangements under the Federation

The role of governance in any education setting is as follows;

1. To set, in collaboration with the Executive Headteacher (to be recruited), the strategic direction and vision of the school federation;
2. To hold the Senior Leadership Team, including the Executive Headteacher, to account for the achievement of any objectives set.
3. Oversee the financial management at the setting.

Under a federation, a single, newly appointed Governing board would be established and would be responsible for both of the Schools in the federation.

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Having a single committee delivers advantages for both Schools: it would ensure that the two Schools move forward together with a shared vision for both our children and respective communities.

If the recommendation to form a federation is accepted, the existing governing boards will begin the process of establishing a new single Governing board for the federation.

It is proposed that the new Governing board would be constituted as below:

Category of Governor	Eleven
Executive Headteacher	1
Staff	1 from across the federation
Parent	2 from across the federation
Local Authority	1
Foundation	2 (nominated by each parish)
Co-opted	4

The members of the new Federation Governing board would be appointed/elected with due regard to:

- Best practice, current thinking and existing regulations in school and federation governance.
- The need to ensure that parents and staff and the local community, are appropriately represented.
- The skills and experience of the individuals concerned – retaining the right to ensure that the Governing board has a broad and appropriate mix of skills and experience.
- Their commitment to education, and the success of the children as both Schools, whatever their professional, parental or community background.

It should also be noted that:

- The new Federation Governing board may differ in size from the envisaged number in the first instance because it is proposed that those who are currently members of either Governing board would be offered the option of being an Associate Member, who are not full governors, but are brought onto a governing board for their expertise or experience.
- Any vacancies that arise for the position of Parent would be filled following an election in which all parents across both school communities would have a vote.
- Any vacancies that arise for the position of Staff would be filled following an election in which all staff across both school communities would have a vote.
- The new Federation Governing board would be encouraged to actively explore how to best engage the voice of our students in the governance and leadership of their Schools.
- The new Federation Governing board, whatever its formal constitution, would also be expected to give opportunities for all stakeholders to have a voice.

C. The Recommendation of the Governing boards

The Governing boards at both Tonwell St Marys and Thundridge recommend that they:

FORM A FEDERATION WITH A SINGLE GOVERNING BOARD FROM

1ST APRIL 2022

Both boards feel that the interests of both school communities are best served by creating a clear line of governance for the Executive Headteacher, rather than two boards, thus progressing to a federation would be the next logical step. We believe the benefits of federation are as follows;

- One clear line of governance for the Executive Headteacher
- Closer working links between the two schools
- Sharing of best practices between our schools
- Opportunities for staff development

Both boards believe that a federation offers the opportunity for a genuinely shared vision and educational philosophy across both schools, one that translate into a positive and joined-up experience for all of our children in both our school communities.

In this context, we are committed to achieving excellence through collaboration between our two vibrant and successful schools. We want to value, nurture and further develop the strengths and identities of both Schools, whilst working together to enhance outcomes for our children. Our aim is to maintain outstanding provision and deliver excellent progress and achievement –and cherished and memorable educational experiences.

We want to continue to give every child in our care the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential as a confident, informed, sociable and well-rounded individual, ready for the next stage of their personal, developmental and educational journey, and for the world beyond. We believe this can be achieved more effectively by our schools working closely together, led by an Executive Headteacher.

In short, we believe that evolving into a federation with one Federation Governing board, is in the interests of students, parent/carers and teaching/support staff. It would provide a shared strategic direction, strengthen ties between Schools and enable shared approaches to assessment, curriculum and improved purchasing power.

THINGS THAT WILL NOT CHANGE SHOULD A FEDERATION BE ESTABLISHED

Should a federation be established between our two schools:

- Each school would retain its existing Christian ethos, character and identity.
- Admission arrangements to both Schools would remain the same (and HCC would continue to be the Admissions Authority for each school).
- The Schools would retain individual budgets and keep their own clear audit trails for all income and expenditure.
- The Schools would be inspected separately by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted.
- The key arrangements for existing staff will continue as per current Terms & Conditions (new employees would be contracted to the Federation).
- The same excellent practice will continue at both schools. Parents would not, in the immediate future, notice any difference in delivery. But in time, witness an enhanced pupil provision as we are enabled and strengthened by working together.

In this context, the Governing boards **do not believe** that a federation would have a negative impact on arrangements that are popular with children, teachers, parents/carers and which work well at present.

