

**FEDERATION OF HEATHFIELD AND ST FRANCIS
SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

Working in partnership together

Consultation on a Proposal to Federate

The Governing Bodies of Heathfield and St Francis Special Schools welcome your views on the proposal to federate the two schools with effect from 6th April 2017

Statutory Consultation Period: 4th January 2017 – 15th February 2017

The Governors of Heathfield and St Francis Special Schools have been working closely together to make secure plans for the future of the schools and to continue to provide the best possible educational provision for all our children.

The schools have always had a close relationship and, as they are next to each other (co-located) on a campus, this has naturally led to the staff and children working jointly on many initiatives. Since December 2015 the Senior Leadership teams have worked closely together and the Headteacher of St Francis Special School has operated as Interim Executive Headteacher overseeing both schools.

Building on the success of the current collaboration, we have been exploring the idea of ‘federating’ both schools and have developed this proposal to explain what federation is and what it might look like in practical terms. We have outlined some of the more significant points to assist parents, members of staff and other interested parties in making their response to the proposal.

Our Shared Vision

Heathfield and St Francis Special Schools play a pivotal role in our local community and provide education for many children with special educational needs in Fareham, Gosport and surrounding areas. Working together has given us the opportunity to focus on providing outstanding educational and non-educational outcomes, as well as pastoral care, to benefit all our children. Formalising our relationship by federating will give a secure and stable foundation on which we can develop and build our schools to be places of which future generations will continue to be proud.

To achieve this we need to:

- ensure that both schools have well-established leadership teams so staff, parents, governors and children can develop sound working relationships
- use our joint expertise to enhance provision so all children achieve excellence and meet their aspirations for the future
- develop staff by sharing and extending our collective strengths
- provide staff with a range of professional development to enable the schools to retain excellent staff
- provide engaging opportunities for all children in both schools to meet and work together
- take opportunities to share resources and costs where possible

The governors are totally committed to ensuring that the arrangement at Heathfield and St Francis Special Schools is a success in its aspiration to provide a happy, vibrant and effective educational community for all. Our staff has many years’ experience working locally and has always believed that partnership with other schools is vital in bringing positive benefits to everyone involved.

Federating gives the whole community a sustainable and highly beneficial future. It is an exciting time to be part of this local community, with our shared aim to become a Centre of Excellence.

What is a Federation?

- A federation is a formal and legal agreement where a single governing body oversees more than one school. The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the conditions and procedures to federate.
- Each school keeps its own name, premises, unique characteristics and ethos and will be led by one Executive Headteacher overseen by a single governing body.

- The schools retain their separate legal status and have their own budgets, performance tables and Ofsted inspections.

The most important factor for considering federation must be because such an arrangement would bring benefits for the children and young people in the schools by enhancing educational provision.

The Process

Both governing bodies met at the start of the Autumn term 2016 and agreed to set up a working party to look at the options.

We are aware that there are many complex issues that will need to be considered in a longer-term, more permanent working relationship. Our schools cater for children with a variety of special needs and, as such, the specific and unique educational needs of each pupil and student must be considered.

Equally, non-educational needs are of paramount importance and it is imperative that the health, care, welfare and emotional needs of our children are met to the highest standards in both schools. It is essential that any future collaboration would improve and enhance the non-educational, as well as the educational, provision.

All stakeholders can be assured that our children and young people will continue to be kept safe and secure at school, as well as receive the best possible education.

In gathering information about federations we have looked for evidence of where good practice has led to best outcomes for children:

Ofsted believes that federating has a positive impact on school improvement and enhances the quality of provision and outcomes for children. Importantly for our schools, Ofsted considers that federating would support, develop and maintain smaller schools into the future.

The Headteacher and governors of a local federation of schools joined us to share their experiences of the process; in common with other federations they found that by sharing expertise, resources and facilities they improved the quality of children's experience.

To have more specific information on federations of special schools, we have made links with two successful special school federations in Sussex whose children most closely match ours. They identified common strengths: cross-federation initiatives, capacity to meet needs flexibly and swiftly, enriched curriculum, greater range of opportunities and, without exception, improved provision and outcomes for children

All the schools we've researched are 'Good' or 'Outstanding' even though some were 'Requiring Improvement' at the beginning of the process. No school has deteriorated.

Having fully considered all the options the governing bodies are proposing that the schools form a federation to be led by a permanent Executive Head Teacher of both schools.

The Proposal

The governing bodies of Heathfield and St Francis Special Schools are proposing to form a federation, to be known as:

The Federation of Heathfield and St Francis Special Schools

The federation would have a single governing body, a single Executive Head Teacher and respective Heads of Schools.

A single governing body would be better able to work strategically with the Executive Headteacher (a Headteacher who has responsibility for more than one school), to:

- strengthen leadership
- ensure high standards of teaching and learning
- manage resources
- ensure the children continue to enjoy a rich curriculum and make good developmental progress.

On a day-to-day basis Heads of School would run the individual schools.

Federating would enable the schools to secure a shared leadership model, which governors believe has been instrumental in ensuring both schools have been able to improve opportunities and outcomes for the children over the past year.

The governors of both schools wish to make it clear that each school would retain its own identity and name.

For the Governing Body it would mean being in a stronger position to:

- continue to raise the standards of education in both schools
- provide excellent educational opportunities for the children across the federation
- monitor the effective deployment of resources/finances to ensure good value for money and positive outcomes for the children
- promote and share a 'clear vision' for the federated schools
- enhance the professional development, retention and recruitment of staff (including succession planning)
- work closely with a range of educational establishments in the local area, to create further opportunities and to ensure the progression/transition for the children is effective
- provide development and training opportunities for our governors, so that the Governing Body continues to perform its duties to a high standard.

How do we believe the proposal would benefit our children?

As governors of both schools, we believe that a federation offers the best future for the children and that federating will improve the quality of education for the children attending both schools in the following ways:

- by providing enhanced learning opportunities for our children
- by preparing them for the next stage of their education
- by enabling access to a wider range of facilities and shared resources
- by holding cross- federation events
- by consistently improving the quality of teaching and learning
- by providing a greater range of leadership opportunities and continuing professional development for all staff
- by enabling us to attract and retain high quality staff and leadership

What will change?

The only changes are to school leadership and governance.

Admissions

There would be no change to the Admissions Policy or process at either school. Hampshire County Council's Special Educational Needs service would continue to be the admissions authority for both schools.

Staffing

- The proposal is to retain the current interim leadership structure on a permanent basis with an Executive Headteacher across the Federation and a Head of School at each School.
- The staffing structure would largely remain the same and will develop to meet the needs of the federation.
- Opportunities to share expertise, particularly across year groups, will enable staff to extend their skills for the benefit of the children.
- There would be opportunities for staff Continued Professional Development.
- There would be no changes to staff contracts as a direct result of the federation.

The two schools share many similarities and are therefore well placed for the staff to better support each other.

When will it happen?

It is proposed that the federation would be formed with effect from 6th April 2017.

Your involvement is important to the governors

Both governing bodies support the federation option but we cannot make a final decision until we have heard and considered your views; the purpose of this document is to explain more about the proposal and to identify how you can contribute to the consultation:

So that there is ample opportunity for everyone to discuss the proposal, there will be consultation events in both Heathfield and St Francis Special Schools.

Consultation drop-in sessions will be held for all staff on:

Date: 10th January 2017 – St Francis staff

Venue: St Francis 1530 - 1615

Date: 10th January 2017 – Heathfield staff

Venue: St Francis 1615 - 1700

Consultation drop-in sessions will be held for any parent on:

Date: 16th January 2017

Venue: Heathfield 1400 – 1500

Open consultation drop-in sessions will be held on:

Date: 17th January 2017

Venue: St Francis 0930 – 1030

Date: 31st January 2017

Venue: Heathfield 0930 -1030

Please write and let us know your thoughts. Written representations can be made:

- by post to either school marked Consultation
- by completing the reply slip attached to this consultation paper
- by using the Consultation Comment boxes in the reception area of both schools
- by email to governors of both schools on consultationdocument2017@gmail.com

The governing bodies will meet on 16th February 2017 to review the information from the consultation and make a final decision whether to proceed with the federation. We will communicate this decision to you within seven calendar days of this date.

Proposed new Governing Body Arrangements

From 6th April 2017 both individual School governing bodies would be closed and a new governing body would be formed for the proposed federation. The federated governing body would have the number and categories of governors shown in the table below. Existing governors from both schools would be invited to apply to join the new governing body, and the parent and staff governor posts would be advertised to the parents and staff of both schools.

Governor Type	Number	Detail
Parent	2	Number required by the regulations. To be elected by the parents of both schools.
Staff	1	Number required by the regulations. To be elected by the staff of both schools.
Head Teacher	1	Appointed by virtue of holding office.
Local Authority	1	Nominated by the LA, appointed by governing body
Co opted	11	Based on the skills required by the new governing body and appointed by the governing body, although staff members cannot exceed 33% of the total number of governors
TOTAL	16	