

Minutes: Federation Public Forums January 2015

22/1/15 Kirkby Fleetham 3.30pm (4 parents, 6 governors including 2 parent governors, 1 member of community, EDA Lesley Taylor, Head Kirkby Fleetham, Head East Cowton)

22/1/15 Kirkby Fleetham 7.00pm (4 parents, 4 governors including parent governors, 1 member of the community, ALA Jo Mackle, Head Kirkby Fleetham, Head East Cowton)

26/1/15 East Cowton 3.00pm (5 parents, 2 governors including parent governors, 1 member of the community, 1 member of staff, Strategic Services (Mark Ashton), Head Kirkby Fleetham, Head East Cowton)

26/1/15 East Cowton 7.00pm (7 parents/prospective parents, 3 governors including parent governors, EDA (Christine Windwood), Head Kirkby Fleetham, Head East Cowton)

Noted that as of 22/1/15 there were 275 views on Kirkby Fleetham Friends Facebook page.

Welcome and Introductions (CF) Chair at Kirkby Fleetham (KF). Introductions and outline of background – federation is formal joining of the leadership of the two schools. Outline of the advantages of partnership working and East Cowton (EC) need for new Headteacher from September 2015 as Dr Smith is moving on after 3 years in post. Working parties have been smooth and schools seem natural fit. A priority is to retain partnerships with other cluster schools that both schools have been working with closely. GT (Chair at EC) added that work on exploring options began in Spring 2014 at EC, and priorities are attainment and education for the children – needs to improve these to be worthwhile. There will be challenges but both Governing Boards are confident it will work well.

At EC meetings: Welcome from Chair for EC, aim of process is to do what is best for the children and their education at East Cowton Primary School. Dr Smith gave good notice to move on, Governors looked at range of options and Federation model was favoured. This meeting is an opportunity for anyone to ask any questions.

HD introduced herself briefly to parents: she has been acting head at two other schools - both those schools federated. She was appointed In January 2014 to KF. Initially this was part time and was not a teaching post; the intention was just to focus on leadership. It was a 3 day role. KF had wanted to move to federation for about 2 years but have been looking for the right school. EC, North & South Cowton and KF have been working together for a couple of years.

Chair: The 3 schools have been doing a lot together at teaching level. When Dr Smith said she was leaving there was the opportunity for governors explore options, rather than just reappoint a part time head. Chair expressed some initial scepticism about the concept of federation but KF governors had gone out and done a lot of research with federations. It is not a panacea but it brings a lot of good. The aim is to improve the education and attainment of the children, if was not going to doing that governors don't want to waste time looking at it. In Autumn we started with two working parties considering if it would be worthwhile with these two schools. We are a very similar size, both Church schools, already working together on projects.

Some detail can't be fixed - e.g. until some of staffing organised, can't identify a lead teacher in HD's absence. Some points can't answer in detail but we feel comfortable going forward and prepared that it will evolve. Governors want it to develop in amicable way. Subject leaders will hopefully find themselves having fewer lead roles so can specialise and look in much greater depth and spread across both schools. Finances are not a driver, although may be some small savings available which means that money can be spent on something else for the children.

At KF meeting the Friends queried raising funds - need to ensure that requests are specific that it is going to both schools and joint fund raising to go to both, or fund raising done by one which is for the children of a particular school.

Q1: Can you identify some of the key challenges?

A: Some will be practical ones, Mrs Dudman (HD) as Headteacher will have split time between two schools so a balancing act to start with. The Subject Leaders in each school will have to work on how to bring curriculum and monitoring together. This will be a learning process to be managed by the staff.

Q2: Will HD be a full time Head?

A: Yes, she will be Headteacher of both Schools with 2.5 days per week paid for in each school. She would still be working for school when at a meeting or on a course. The Head would spend approximately half each week at each school depending where the biggest priority is at that time. Should be seen as a positive as Head is full time and can fully focus on that role. A number of Heads of Federations work on a 2 week rolling programme to make sure they are present at key events e.g. celebration worship at both schools. This would evolve over time.

EDA for both schools (Lesley Taylor) added she had been Head of a collaboration of 2 and 3 schools and said as Head you are always available as not off work and each collaboration finds a unique way of working. As EDA she has seen already the positives for planning work done together between KF and EC in sharing progress and attainment data and socially for the children.

Q3: Will there be a 'second in command' designated person in each school? /Whose going to be in charge when HD not here?

A: HD will be, whichever school she happens to be in. We will appoint a teacher who will be the lead teacher to go to if there is a problem. We will be advertising at KF as there is currently a temporary arrangement until end of this academic year due to the previous KS2 teacher gaining promotion. Such opportunities are valuable for upskilling of staff in small schools for succession planning. Not sure what will look like, day to day management and the Head is still working and responsible for the school even if not on site. In an emergency the Head can move between schools.

Q4: What about Ofsted? Can there be the advantage of amalgamating results across the two schools bearing in mind small cohorts?

A: Ofsted inspections are still separate as could potentially mask issues if data amalgamated. The schools may be inspected at the same time or on successive days but there would be a judgement

for each school. Ofsted not settled down over federation. If one school came off worse in the inspection, Governors would look to the LA for support through a difficult time.

Q5: When was the last Ofsted at EC?

A: September 2011. Potentially Ofsted could be quick as Federation could trigger. This would be a challenge to the Headteacher who would have to move between the Schools during the inspection day(s) and the new Governing Body as consecutive meetings would be needed.

Q6: Will two Governing Bodies be subsumed into one?

A: The two will merge into one of a smaller size. We would need to hold elections for elected posts – parents, staff in the summer term so we would hit the ground running in September. The Diocese will appoint one Governor; also the LA will appoint one. Other posts will be co-opted.

Q7: Both schools are Church of England Schools. What about the Diocese inspection?

A: SIAMs inspections are separate within the 5 years from the previous one. The Diocese is fully aware of the federation plans.

Q8: What about sharing resources? The Friends may have questions from parents if the results of our time and effort in fundraising will go across to another school and not benefit our children.

A: This is an important question. In time it might be that the two Friends work together which could evolve to joining up? Split money equally on joint project? Benefits could also be with swapping of equipment, could get different PE equipment in each school then swap. Have to agree with each other what happens. It could be that inter-school events across the two schools raise money together e.g. jumble sale in Northallerton. It was also suggested that money raised from individual events would go to individual schools. It will evolve in time, parents may start interconnecting quickly - maybe an exploration of the friends joining up outing!!

The working group will be meeting again following these Forums and this will be brought back to working group as we are sensitive to parents raising money for their own school. The communication between Governors and the Friends will be very important, made easier as there will be one Head listening to both of the Friends and her management.

Q8a: What about School Fund?

A: Need to be aware for audit etc.

Q9: What do parents from EC think?

A: Positive initially. The working group has been minded to believe more attitude change required by EC as their current Head is 0.8FTE and going down to 0.5FTE might be a big change.

Q10: Can ex-parents contribute to the consultation?

A : More than welcome

Q11: Budgets are currently separate, are they likely to merge?

A: It would be a Governor decision to merge and at the end of academic year they would have to be separated again. The committed working party will continue to meet and hold Governors and Leadership to account. It is envisaged that the budget can be used to achieve more – spending from one to provide for both. Having the same SBM will save time as policies etc. would be for both schools. Chair of EC commented on some budgetary advantages: There would be economies of scale in terms of spending - at moment have 1.4 HT time, saving .4 HT time straight away. MASS school support, may be able to save some money through joining up how that's purchased. Another example is buying equipment - can swap between the two schools and can look at what both schools already have when buying new. It's exciting for children and will provide them wider opportunities. An obvious example is PE equipment but the same is true with items as basic as reading books.

Q12: What about school meals?

A: We are not looking at sharing meals with distance to travel between the two schools. Also still need to pay for staff to serve, wash up and taxi and procedures e.g. keeping temperatures constant.

Q13: What about swapping round of teachers? / Exchange of staff?

A: Not at the moment but it might be that there is a specialist on one site. New staff will be appointed to the Federation. The federation would look first at sharing Subject Leadership which would give stronger subject leaders as more time to look at standards and quality. With more children staff will be able to develop more expertise and experience. Staff have worked together for the last year to bounce ideas off each other. At EC we have a lot of job share staff so a bigger bank of staff to call on for supply that the children will increasingly know. For the children one example could be PE where facilities are better at EC, so could have for example all Y5/6 together and appropriate challenge. Could have group teams and also from Robinwood, the Y5 children now know one member of staff from other school well, and the other children from that year group. In the Swainby/Osmotherley/ Potto partnership which has been established for 4-5 years the children now know the teachers from both schools – one teacher from one of the schools went on the Robinwood visit and this will happen for East Barnby for Year 6. The benefits often start with music and sport. DB primary addresses across the two schools and North and South Cowton have been discussed.

Q14: How does HD feel about it?

A: It is exciting! Have worked in two other schools that were federating, learned the positives and the challenges. There will be the unseen.

KF Governor: We are fortunate to have appointed a Head at KF with previous experience of working towards and in confederations.

From a parent: Timing wise this has not been forced and it is good that it has evolved, it makes perfect sense. There will be parents who are more in the dark about federations and information will need to go out in different ways so everyone knows about it.

From a Parent: Is it more difficult to travel to EC? Mrs Dudman said she had done it before from Ripon to previous posts. Journey time less than Dr Smith currently travelling.

Q15: Is HD teaching now? Will Mrs Flanagan go full time?

A: We will appoint someone from September who will be a full time member of staff. Staff appointed from September will have a Federation contract rather than one at one school or another.

It could be a member of staff from the other school to cover PPA so children may be exposed to a wider range of staff but on a regular weekly basis. Children will not be moving between schools very much. Miss Lawton had all the qualifications to lead the school when HD not here. From September each class will have main teacher for most of the week, Mrs Dudman is in KS2 temporarily due to Miss Lawton moving on. This gives an element of continuity to have HD for some of the week. The point was raised that children in some year groups at KF have had 1 teacher all the way through due to swap of Miss Lawton to KS2, and now a change to 3:2 ratio is tricky- if some difficulties with work and the teacher who knows them best isn't always there, this makes it harder in one of the final years at primary school and if child is less confident. The other side is that even though this is tricky it could be preparation for secondary school. Also being with EC for Robinwood means children know another staff member and children so a bigger community. The school will seem the same in September with HD as part time Head as previously. If HT not a teaching head, should give more stability as cover not needed for the Head to go to meetings.

Q16: Will they do more sport activities together?

A: EC have better facilities. Good to do sport with children of own age and ability and potential to enter competitions as a federation team. Children who have similar interests can meet with each other.

Q17: How far is it between the schools? Will a big chunk of the day be taken up travelling?

A: 10 miles on the bus (A1), allow half an hour.

Q18: Can we get a minibus? Could the schools buy one together? Village committee community bus and lend it to the school?

A: We can borrow Mowbray and Bedale bus for free and HD has minibus licence, with staff from EC also interested. If there was one between the schools we would need to rent it out to cover the running costs. Any moving will be planned in advance and will be when obvious benefit – productions etc. - as we would need to consider staffing if only part of the school out.

Q19: Will it affect the running of the school office?

A: The SBM is shared, so in many cases there will be one set of paperwork instead of two. The SBM will be available half a day a week for the federation and could sometimes have the space to work in the opposite office to the Head. There can be economies of scale, make savings to spend on the children in a different way. The Head will see more of the EDA/Finance/SEN team who come in.

Q20: Is there a risk of KF shutting if federation didn't go ahead?

A: Governors have to decide if the school is viable or not. The ALA gave a number of 21 as when significant problems of budget as national funding arise; often resulting in children aged 4-11 being taught in the same class for part of the day. KF currently has 29 pupils and would aim for nearer 40 pupils. New regulations mean schools cannot have a part time Head. If we do not federate at KF, we would have to immediately look at the budget as we could not afford a full time Head plus two full

time teachers; HD was a part time appointment to keep a full time teacher in each class but she would have to become a full time teaching Head. This way (Federation) the Leadership and Management stays as strong as possible and we would save 0.4 of a Headteacher plus on-costs across the two schools from the current position (0.6 KF +0.8 EC = 1.4) so we are in a better position with budgets at both schools a problem in Year 3.

Governors are currently looking at setting up a Nursery replicating what happens at East Cowton. The new preschool group meeting at the School has had a successful start.

Q21: Is there any possibility of other schools coming in to the federation?

A: Yes. It is a journey, it may be an opportunity arises and it's good for children. The national picture supports federation to get good quality leadership. There are now 4 partnerships in the area with schools in different arrangements. The Local Authority have learned from other examples and here we have done it the best way, slowly and consultation very early on in the process.

Q22: Why East Cowton?

A: KF was ready to federate and had visited a lot of federations. EC was in position where needed to decide what to do as their Head was leaving. The schools have been working together closely for 12 months, are similar sized Church schools and it felt like a good fit. Federations where the schools are closer together often find it harder as overlapping catchment areas. In this case we clearly have to keep 2 separate schools open due to the distance and it will not be a mishmash of federation and amalgamation. Federation is legally binding.

Q23: Are the children going to spend much time being taught on the two sites?

A: We are not planning that – keeping all the year 5/6 children together and year 3/4 together for PE has been talked about so that they can play against children their own age which is more challenging for them. No plans to bus children backwards and forwards and would be carefully thought through. It is easier to move staff, although not planning on doing that either. Don't envisage will move much more than they do at present e.g. staff already moving for staff meetings - good to have more staff to bounce ideas off, or volunteering to go on courses or feedback from training been on.

Q24: Curriculum planning - will this lead to less responsibility for subject leaders in such small schools?

A: It's about developing expertise. At the moment both schools send both, e.g. literacy co-ordinators, on the same courses. On return they then have to also focus on other responsibilities, e.g. sorting out music. HD can see the value of sharing those roles across the federation to allow staff to develop specialisms and have more time for one focus. KF is appointing a full time teacher from September. Both Heads have done a skills audit across the two schools and worked together to write the person specification to ensure candidates provide what both schools need.

Q25: With SEN co-ordinators they need to know the children - how would that work if there was a lead in the other school?

A: HD has always been a SENCO and will probably be a lead SENCO within the federation. Understands parents concern that if there is only one at the other school that person might not

know the child, know the background of the interventions and what has worked/not worked in the past. HD is clear that SENCO is the one area where it is important to keep two co-ordinators, at least at first, until we have a clearer picture of how well staff get to know children in the other school.

Q26: Will this lead to a wider federation? The LA has been known to put pressure on good schools to support others who might not be doing well. Federations which grow too fast can fail.

A: We plan to continue the links with North and South Cowton as they are. We don't think they're in a position to consider anything more at this stage. We are not encouraging a wider federation at this stage and within the first 24 months can't see benefit of going bigger. We need to ensure changes are bedded in.

Q27: What happens if numbers fall at one of the schools?

A: Federation is something schools can come out of so if one school found itself in difficulties then in a worst case scenario it decouple. It's not envisaged that this will be a problem. In addition both schools are similar sizes so there is no "dominant partner".

Q28: To have a joint Head, do you need a federation?

A: Not necessarily but usually.

Q29: What about the distance between the schools? Merging?

A: Some federations have a contingency that KS1 will be taught on one site, KS2 on the other. This will not happen as distances are too far. It also means catchments remain separate which is positive.

Q30: What about the Eppleby/Middleton Tyas issue? Could it happen here?

A: Consultants have given options and there is consultation happening. The media have latched on to 'closure'. This isn't a step to closure. At one of the schools there is a very large Y6 group leaving in 2015 which will half the number in the school.

Q31: Can you go back after Federation?

A: Both schools are fully committed but there will be a review clause put in and the joint Governor working party will remain for accountability.

Q32: What are the other options with Dr Smith moving on? The children need stability as some have seen several Heads during their time at East Cowton.

A: A new Head could be appointed on a 'like for like' basis, there are recruitment issues for Heads but there is still time to go down that road if the consultation ends in a no for federation.

Q33: Is the lead teacher likely to be the same person?

A: It depends on the staffing and who wants the job!

Q34: What is the general feedback at Kirkby Fleetham?

A: Very positive.

Q34: What about teachers across schools?

A: On the ground the children won't notice much difference. When other federations were asked they would not revert from the federation.

The minutes are a record of this meeting and responses. All attendees were thanked; parents expressed trust for the governors and working party to make the right decisions.

What will happen next?

All encouraged to fill in the consultation document.

Responses to be compiled by the working party of Governors and a summary written.

Full Governors from each School meet to decide to federate or not.

FEDERATION: Pupil Voice

East Cowton School Council, Collective Worship Creators, Eco-Committee 29th January 2015

Will there be a new teacher on Fridays?

Yes. A new teacher will be appointed who may teach on Fridays.

Who will do RE?

It may be the new teacher, or one of the other teachers in school.

Can we do a Collective Worship about the two schools coming together?

Yes, we can do one on Monday 2nd February.

Are Kirkby Fleetham eco-friendly?

We can look on The Pod and their website (they are!).

Can we have a day for Kirkby Fleetham to come to us so we can get to know them better?

Yes, there are already some curriculum days planned but we can have a 'getting to know you' day. We can also go for a day to Kirkby Fleetham to see their school.

Will the Y6 from Kirkby Fleetham join us for SATs this year?

No, the Year 6 pupils from each school will stay at their own school.

Will we be changing school?

No, you will all be taught at East Cowton and the Kirkby Fleetham children will be taught at their school.

Will the School Councils merge?

Only if they want to.

Will Mrs Dudman do School Council?

I expect Mrs Dudman will lead the School Council, but another teacher might be involved.

What if the School Council is split into two halves?

Each half could have a project and some joint projects too.

Will Mrs Dudman do Celebration Assembly on Thursdays?

Mrs Dudman will be at some Collective Worships like Mrs Smith is now. The days for Celebration Assembly might be different in each school so she can be at both some weeks.

Friday 23rd January: Kirkby Fleetham School Collective Worship with Collette Faulks, Chair of governors.

How often will Mrs Dudman be out?

Two and a half days a week, though sometimes it might be 3 days in one school and two days in the other

Will it be like when Mrs Vernon was our headteacher?

Yes, it will also be like when Mrs Dudman was part time headteacher except if there's a problem when Mrs Dudman is out she will be able to speak to the teachers on the phone or drive to school.

Is Mrs Smith leaving?

Yes, she will leave in July.

Will we be able to go to East Cowton a lot?

Probably not much more than we do at present. It might increase in the future.

Can school council ask what everyone thinks about it?

Yes they could write some questions at their meeting on Monday.

Summary of School council's findings:

All 29 children were asked the following:

Is working with another school a good thing?

25 said yes, 3 weren't sure and one said no.

Additional comments were:

It is good to have more children to work with

We can make more friends

It will help us get ready for high school

You can share ideas with people

We can work together to get jobs done

The teachers will pick up good tips

You can see what each other do

Are there any bad things about working with another school?

6 said yes, one didn't know and 22 said no

Additional comments:

We don't know what they will be like

We aren't used to them yet

We won't see Mrs Dudman as much

They might disagree with us

The teachers will have more meetings to go to