

**EAST COWTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL and  
KIRKBY FLEETHAM CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL FOR FEDERATION**

**JANUARY 2015**

This document sets out the details of a proposal to federate East Cowton CE (VC) Primary School and Kirkby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School with effect from 1st September 2015.

The Governing Bodies of East Cowton CE (VC) Primary School and Kirkby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School are consulting parents, staff, the local community and other stakeholders on a proposal to change how the two schools are led and managed. This document describes what federation would mean to both schools, how this would differ from the current collaborative working partnership and most importantly what the impact would be on the children of each school. It also describes how you can make your views known.

The consultation has the support of North Yorkshire County Council and the Diocese of York and staff from both have assisted with the extensive research undertaken by all members of the Governing Bodies to create this document.

**FEDERATION**

The two schools, alongside North & South Cowton School, have been working together on a far more frequent basis in the last couple of years. The staff and more recently governors have increasingly strengthened collaborative working practices to maximise learning opportunities and experiences for the children of each small school. In recent times the two Governing Bodies have been separately looking at working practices that increase these opportunities and formalise the arrangements in order to improve the education of our children. As a result of some excellent research by the Governors of Kirkby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School and shared best practice with those schools that are already federated it is the belief of both Governing Bodies that a federation between the schools is the preferred course of action for the future.

**WHAT IS FEDERATION?**

Firstly, we can reassure you that:

- It is **NOT** an amalgamation of the two schools.
- It is **NOT** a closure of either school.

The Governing Body of each school has judged it is the right time to move to a Federation. This involves a change in governance from two separate governing bodies to one shared governing body with responsibility for both schools. In the proposed federation the two schools will remain legally separate schools each with their own allocated budget, buildings

and admissions policy but would be run by one headteacher responsible for both schools. East Cowton CE (VC) Primary School and Kirkby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School would each retain their own identity, as set out in the new Instrument of Governance, a legal document that all governing bodies have and which would be drawn up for the new governing body by the legal department of the Local Authority. This will reflect the continuing distinctiveness of the two schools.

## **WHY FEDERATE?**

We believe that leading and governing together in a formal partnership will guarantee for the future the partnership working that already happens between our two schools, developing the informal partnership that already exists, for the benefit of all the children. The change to a federation will formalise a total commitment from everyone at both schools to work together. We will, of course, continue to work in partnership with other schools in the area, especially North and South Cowton Community Primary School. We have explored what has worked well elsewhere in North Yorkshire and identified many benefits and also some challenges.

### **The benefits**

- Greater challenge across ability groups.
- Enhanced learning drawing on the expertise of a greater number of teachers and support staff.
- Children get to mix with more children of their own age.
- Children more likely to know another child when they move on to secondary school.
- Enhanced personal and social skills for children.
- More teams for sport
- Looking at performance data across two schools aids accuracy and moderation of judgements.
- Spread of subject leadership across schools taps into individual expertise.
- Teaching staff able to share planning drawing on one another's ideas and expertise.
- Shared working is good professional development for staff leading to better experience for children.
- New staff will have contracts to work across both schools giving flexibility when issues arise and helping succession planning.
- Head having leadership and management of more staff makes it easier to flex to changing pupil numbers or budget
- A headship role across both schools that is secure, sustainable and an attractive proposition to potential future candidates at a time when recruitment to small rural primary schools within North Yorkshire is very difficult.
- Head has more time to give strong strategic leadership focus and ensure consistently high quality of education.
- Mutual development, especially when new initiatives are involved, improves education provision.
- Federating helps to safeguard the viability of both schools by sharing expertise and making the school more attractive when recruitment of new staff is needed.

- Any financial savings through sharing the cost of the joint head, collective purchasing, joint use of PE funds, etc. can enhance provision for children
- Rationalisation of governance arrangements and access to wider expertise among governors.
- Before and after school care more viable.
- Promotes time-saving, efficient practices across both schools whilst not compromising quality, personal relationships and effective communication.

As we have already said, Federation is not about closure or ending, quite the opposite. Federation can help small rural schools such as ours to remain sustainable and viable on separate sites.

### **The challenges**

We do not see federation as an answer to all the challenges currently faced by small rural primary schools. We recognise that any change will raise questions and concerns. Experience from other federations shows that we will need to be particularly mindful of the following:

- The head's accessibility to parents when leading both schools, which we will address through a number of measures set out in more detail in the accompanying 'Frequently asked questions' document.
- Movement of children between sites – logistics and rationale. There have been a limited number of occasions when children have come together at one or other school in the last year or so for a specific purpose. We do not anticipate any significant increase in this.
- Cost of transport. There is adequate funding in the budget to cover the cost of staff travel expenses. We do not expect there to be any change to the contributions made by parents when children are off-site for a school curriculum activity.
- Extra work at end of financial year separating out the two school budgets. The schools share the same bursar already and she also acts for a federation of two schools and so has experience of this work.
- Ofsted treats schools in federation as separate entities and the head and governors will have to cope with two inspections and two reports. Ofsted has now modified its practice so that schools in a federation are inspected on successive days so the extra work is more manageable. We think this disadvantage is outweighed by the benefits of federation.
- There is a lot of detailed organisation needed before the federation can be up and running. A joint committee of the two existing governing bodies is already working on the details and the 'Frequently asked questions' document addresses some of these. Once the federation has been established and settled into a pattern of operation we think the increased budget and staffing flexibility it offers will enable future operational issues to be dealt with more easily than at present.

## HOW WILL THE FEDERATION BE ORGANISED?

East Cowton CE (VC) Primary School and Kirkby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School will remain separate schools. Their names will remain the same and children will continue to be registered at either school according to parental choice within the NYCC **admissions** policy, as is currently the case. Each school will retain their own uniform, colours and school logo.

Both schools are church schools and a Christian **ethos** will remain at the heart of each.

Each school will continue to be funded separately, with **budgets** largely dependent on pupil numbers, as they are now. However, Federation will allow efficiency savings through joint financial and strategic planning.

Federation means that **one headteacher** will lead both schools, sharing time between both. The headteacher and the staff will work in close partnership with the governors to manage all aspects of both schools, but in particular to achieve excellent teaching and learning at both schools.

A new, single **Governing Body** will be created. There will be 12 governors in total, being representative of both schools and made up of the following categories:

2 Parent governors (1 from each school, elected by the parents at each school)

Headteacher

1 Staff governor

1 Local Authority governor (nominated by the Local Authority)

2 Foundation governors (appointed by the Diocese)

5 Co-opted governors (appointed by the other governors including 2 parents)

It is likely that many existing governors will express an interest in being part of the new governing body, to provide some continuity.

**Staff** will continue to be employed by North Yorkshire County Council under the direction of the headteacher. There will be no change to employment conditions of service for staff. Current staff will continue to work within their own schools. However, future appointments could be asked to work at either (or both) school(s). All staff, teaching and non-teaching, will continue to benefit from shared training opportunities and open, professional dialogue in sharing best practice.

The current governing bodies of East Cowton CE (VC) Primary School and Kirkby Fleetham CE Primary School, with the support of NYCC Education Department and the Diocese, have given considerable thought to this proposal. We are now asking parents, staff and our communities to consider the proposal document and share their views with us.

Please also read the attached following supplementary document:

- Frequently asked questions about the proposed Federation

## **NEXT STEPS**

You are invited to attend any of the **PUBLIC MEETINGS**. Parents of children attending the schools, parents of pre-school children and members of the community are welcome to attend.

**KIRKBY FLEETHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL            3.30PM & 7PM THURSDAY 22ND JAN 2105**

**EAST COWTON PRIMARY SCHOOL            3.30PM & 7PM MONDAY 26TH JAN 2015**

The Governing Bodies of each school will meet together post the closure of the consultation on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to consider the responses from the public meetings and any written contributions received. Immediately following this meeting, each Governing Body will meet separately to decide whether to proceed.

After these meetings the decision as to whether to federate or not will be announced. This is likely to be made before the commencement of Easter holidays. If it is decided not to Federate then the schools will continue to collaborate under the present arrangements. If it is decided that Federation will take place then a meeting will be held between the governors of the two schools to finalise detailed arrangements so that the Federation can begin on 1st September 2015. Whatever decision is made it is the intention of both governing boards that the partnership with North & South Cowton School and other cluster schools should continue.

Parents and members of the community will be kept informed throughout this process.

## **HOW TO MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN**

You may attend either public meeting (or both), but we would also welcome written responses. Please complete the attached response sheet and return it in an envelope marked **FEDERATION PROPOSAL** to the Chairs of Governors at either

East Cowton CE (VC) Primary School            OR            Kirkby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School

Alternatively, you can email either of the Chairs of Governors using the email addresses overleaf. Please ensure you include all of the information requested on the response sheet.

**The closing date for responses is 4pm 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015.**

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Mr Graeme Thompson  
Chair of Governors  
East Cowton CE (VC) Primary School  
[admin@eastcowton.n-yorks.sch.uk](mailto:admin@eastcowton.n-yorks.sch.uk)

Mrs Collette Faulks  
Chair of Governors  
Kirkby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School  
[admin@kirkbyfleetham.n-yorks.sch.uk](mailto:admin@kirkbyfleetham.n-yorks.sch.uk)

**YOUR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSAL TO FEDERATE EAST COWTON CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL  
AND KIRKBY FLEETHAM CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

OBSERVATIONS/SUGGESTIONS ON THE PROPOSAL

**CLOSING DATE FOR THIS CONSULTATION IS 4pm 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2015**

YOUR INTEREST IN EAST COWTON OR KIRKBY FLEETHAM SCHOOLS - please tick the appropriate box

Parent/carer of child registered at East Cowton

Parent/carer of child registered at Kirkby Fleetham

Parent of a pre-school child

Member of East Cowton staff

Member of Kirkby Fleetham staff

Other (Please state)

You are not required to complete the personal information below. However, it would be helpful to the Governing Bodies if you do so.

NAME

ADDRESS

POST CODE

DATE

N.B. Under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, responses to the consultation may be accessed by members of the public.

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